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The Yoga of The Saints

The Yoga of The Saints

Analysis of Spiritual Life

by

V. H. DATE

with a foreword by

Late Professor R. D. Ranade

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To

My

Spiritual Teacher

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Foreword

I HAVE GREAT pleasure in writing this Foreword to Dr. Date's work on the *Analysis of Spiritual Fxperience*. This work in its original form he had submitted for the Ph.D. Degree of the Bombay University, and I am glad to learn that the University conferred the degree on him after a careful scrutiny. Dr. Date has profited greatly by his studies in contemporary Psychology, Ethics, Mahārāshtra Mysticism, and Indian and European philosophy generally. One of the particular characteristics of the work is the freedom with which the author expresses his opinions. They may occasionally seem dogmatic to certain readers, but it must be remembered that they are the outcome of his own deep conviction and personal experience. Dr. Date has studied particularly works on the Psychology of Religion which have helped him greatly in the denouement of his work. His discussion of the two conversions, the moral and the spiritual, as well as the two Dark Nights, one the pre-illuminational and the other the post-illuminational, is very interesting. The moral bearing of Spiritual Experience has particularly attracted the attention of Dr. Date, and his treatment of the effect of God-vision and the Ideal Saint as depicted in the religious literature and tradition of Mahārāshtra is particularly interesting. The evident care and attention which his supervisor Prof. A. K. Trivedi bestowed upon the thesis while it was in progress has certainly left its mark upon its production. When Dr. Date is discussing the method which he wishes to follow in his work (Chap. I), one is insensibly reminded of similar discussions as *e.g.*, by Prof. Taylor only as applied to the subject of Spiritual Experience. When Dr. Date discusses the nature of Religious Belief (Chap. II), a host of writers on that subject come before our mind's eye. Of particular value is

Dr. Date's discussion of the points of difference between Pātañjala-yoga and Bhakti-yoga (Chap. V). His treatment of the Nature of the object of Spiritual Experience (Chap. VIII) is also very illuminating. Dr. Date is the master of a style, all his own. His phrasing is very often happy though one could sometimes wish a change here or a change there. Altogether Dr. Date has produced a work which will command our respect. I have no doubt that it makes a contribution to recent discussions on the subject of the Philosophy and Psychology of Religion and I wish it every success.

R. D. RANADE

ALLAHABAD,
16 January, 1944.

Preface to the Second Edition

YE WHO WISH not to be duped by falsehood, illusion, hallucination and delusion, nor by anything occult, hypnotic and magical, nor again wish to come under the woeful influence of drugs or of the pretenders and rogues in the garb of sadhus and the recluse, nor wish to be carried away by poetic imagination, sexual imagery and fantastic notions about the future arrival of incarnations of God amongst us, and a hundred and one such barren, and superstitious ideas, listen to us then with a faith to inquire and with a will to practise, so that even if you happen to meet with a series of dogmas in the beginning, you will come to realise in course of time that they are dogmas of the wise who have had a direct, concrete and immediate contact with Reality, as the late Professor R.D. Ranade used to propound. It is not God who is in the making; it is we who are so. For it is we who in the very process of knowing Him have to become gradually and approximately like Him.

The discovery of God has been made till now by saints and prophets all over the world, and their experiences recorded in the scriptures. But the truth of them all has to be tested by our own rediscovery of the presence of the Divine in us as well as in others and in the Nature outside. Till this is not done by oneself with an initial but provisional faith in another person who has realized God, and till one has not toiled and toiled steadily and silently and for a very long time by putting in intellectual and moral efforts and by means of a regular practice of the moral and spiritual discipline of meditation and contemplation, all talk about the divine presence and of the consequent joy and peace, is nothing but moonshine.

There are no short cuts to the royal throne of God; no jet meditations, no auto-suggestions created by repeating the formula such as 'I am the Brahman', or 'All this is Brahman', or by imagining that one has always the bliss of Brahman without doing anything. No amount of ritualism, penance, bodily tortures, philanthropic acts will bring one nearer God, unless one feels, notwithstanding one's being endowed with plenty in other respects a vacuum in life which can never be filled by anything else except God, unless, in other words, one feels the painful hunger for God, and unless someone else teaches the way of love and attachment to God who is the eternal source of energy, joy and peace.

This indeed was the theme which we tried to expound in the first edition of our work. However, since then, twenty-nine years have passed, during which period I have witnessed that vast changes have taken place in the socio-economic and ethico-spiritual attitudes and activities of men. I have seen men of great spiritual promise turn into faithless and ungrateful slaves of their own selfish ends; I have seen persons having no spiritual inclination, persons who were fortunate to have affluent circumstances, and as such who had an atheistic bent of mind turn, all of a sudden, into good devotees of God for the simple reason that they were intellectually honest and were eager to make for themselves the discovery of God. A corresponding change in my outlook and awareness of the growth and expansion of the dimensions of the spiritual life also occurred in me, since I came in contact with several realized souls and observed their day-to-day practice of moral and spiritual activities. I then felt the need of making my former analysis of spiritual life more convincing to myself and to others by making it more and more appealing to the intellectuals who are keen to understand the secrets of spiritual life. I have therefore revised the entire material, modified it in many places either by inserting relevant topics or by omitting some, and have added six new chapters.

But if we are not to be sentimental alone or ratiocinative alone, it is necessary that our emotions and reason must find expression in such activities as will not only guarantee our own moral and spiritual well-being, but will be helpful in ameliorating the condition of our fellow-beings also. What we shall be writing in the following pages therefore will not only be an appeal to the feelings and reason of man, but an appeal to his will-power also. And yet, our activities must not be such as will preserve our own selfish interests but such as will help to preserve the interest of others, especially on the ethico-spiritual level. And this can be done only when the activity is carried on with the spirit of renouncing the fruit of that activity. Further, still, it must be noted that no renunciation of the fruits of activity will be possible unless many of the motives of activity are curbed.

The modern world needs no advice to be active. Industrialization, mass production, monopolization, and world astounding inventions and enterprizes have no doubt, made the mankind more and more active either in self-aggrindisement or in utter despair in destroying the solidarity and peace of mankind. On the one hand, there is the struggle for the very existence of life; on the other, there is the greed to become more and more powerful in order to silence forever the groaning murmurs of the half-dead, starving and the naked. One who thinks will shudder to see this spectacle, and wonder if this sort of the two-fold activity of the peoples of the world is going to save their souls.

Looking closer to what is going on in the cities, we find that due to the various compulsions of activities connected with business, service and transport, lots of people return to their homes only to rest at night. It is no wonder if they do not know as to who stays in the adjoining flats, when as a matter of fact, they meet their children once in a week. Machine-like activities for earning the bread for five or six days, alternate with equally feverish activities of the week-ends to make life enjoyable by pleasure-trips, cinema-shows, dinners, dances and music. Add to this the possibility of easy divorce, and the break-up of the joint family system, and then gone are the virtues of obedience, the affection and the respect for the parents and the elderly persons and the love and care of the children beyond a particular age. Even the religious instinct becomes a matter of empty ritual, or at best an occasional sentimentalism which is nothing but a temporary reaction of some unpleasant event or bereavement in the family. And if what happens in the urban areas is to be a model for what should happen in the rural ones, then it might not be an ideal forecast to say that, in course of time, the human activity will best be measured in terms of biological activity. Each tree or plant will live for itself; what happens to the neighbouring plant or tree is not its concern.

Then, alas, Hobbes would be correct not only in having told us that egoism is the primary motive of human activity, but that it would also be the final and the only motive. Even the rational hedonism of H. Sidgwick would appear as too high an ideal for man to achieve, and the utter skepticism of Hume the only haven of gloom and despair. Here and there, a Ford, a Tata or a Birla might come on the scene to ameliorate the miserable plight and ignorance of man, by creating a Foundation or a Trust; but even this impersonal sympathetic aid, which is not even one percent of the total need, is not unlikely to be misspent by those who are in charge of utilizing it, unless they are prompted by similar philanthrophic motives; unless, in other words, they have the sympathy and love for those who are suffering in one way or the other.

What then is the source of this sympathy and love which one ought to feel for the down-trodden and the miserable? It is what Sidgwick calls as the reason in man. Man, as an animal, is bound to be egoistic; man as rational will certainly be altruistic, though he will seek his own pleasure also. One may contend that it is the reason in man which comes to diverse conclusions and creates newer and newer ideologies, and then it again becomes a problem as to which one of the several ideologies is correct. The answer is that though reason creates its own ills, the remedy to remove them is reason only, just as a thorn is required to remove a thorn which has pricked and gone into the flesh. Then alone, with the help of reason the human activity will be so motivated and channelised as will enhance the moral and the spiritual worth of man. Till then, neither activity nor renunciation alone will deliver the goods. It will be activity saddled with renunciation that will prevent a man from becoming a rattling machine on the one hand, and an idler and a parasite on the other. As the Bhagavadgītā puts it. 'He is a wise man who finds actionlessness in action and action in actionlessness,' though by 'actionlessness' it does not simply mean cessation from doing anything, but meditation and contemplation on the Name and Forms of God. Renunciation or 'Sannyāsa' on the ethico-spiritual level has not simply the negative meaning of abandoning something, but has also the additional positive meaning of meditation and contemplation.

And, finally, when one accomplishes the most intensive active condition of the soul, namely, the silent meditation on the Name of God and that of an undistracted absorption in the contemplation on the visions of God or in similar other experiences, it would depend upon the temperamental inclination of his mind whether he should or should not engage himself in any other overt activity of which the society and the world at large are fond so excessively. Alas, poor must be the intelligence and imagination of those who would accuse him of being inactive and selfish; for it is he who, though invisibly to others, is the most active and the most unselfish of all.

I feel great pleasure in acknowledging that I am indebted to a number of friends in preparing this revised edition of my first venture in publishing what I then thought to be of lasting value in the field of spiritual literature. Dr. Mohanlal Sharma, M.A., Ph.D., Head of the Department of Philosophy in the University of Jodhpur, Professor D.D. Harsh, and Mr. Jagannath Vyas, M.A., have rendered me invaluable service in more than one way. They read out the entire manuscript during several spiritual meetings which I used to have with them and others on Sundays; they corrected the whole of the manuscript and the proofs, and giving me a number of very useful suggestions, evinced their sympathetic though critical interest in the work every now and then. All this, I can never forget. This, I used to say to them, amounts to their service to the Guru and to God. Mr. Kanhiya Lal Joshi, B. Com., LL.B., was as usual all smiles whenever he could get an occasion to put his fingers on the key-board of my type-writer or of helping me in preparing the Index or some such work. People count the obligations and repay them in terms of money. I only thank him in my heart; for I know that he has been doing the typing of my books as a service to God. Mr. Devendra Jain, who though encouraged by the success of publishing my *Brahma-yoga of the Gīta* (December, 1971) showed himself to be all the more enthusiastic in publishing this work. He has done the job so elegantly and without a blemish; and so, I am exceedingly thankful to him. Lastly, I must thank a person who, though not connected in any way directly with this edition, has been watching the progress of it, as also the progress of its author. He wrote to me recently that all that I have been doing for the last 30 years is as if the sign of the fact that God is following me. What Dr. K.R. Shrinivas Iyengar, M.A., D.Litt. Ex-Vice-Chancellor, Waltair University, intends thereby to convey to me is that I am following in the footsteps of the saints who are ceaselessly after God, so that He may protect me with his love and grace. In fact, it is this wish of my friend which I cherish to have for myself and for others as a realized Reality.

I am much obliged to the Universitv of Poona for giving me permission to reproduce in this edition the two lectures which I had delivered in Poona in the month of December 1971 as "The Gurudeva R.D. Ranade Memorial Lectures." They form the last two chapters. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my heartfelt thanks to Shri R.K. Sharma, the Proprietor of the Agra Printing Works in getting this book printed so finely.

V.H. Date

Jodhpur,
28 February, 1974.

Preface to the First Edition

THIS BOOK IS substantially the same as my thesis which was accepted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by the University of Bombay in 1941. To Prof. A. K. Trivedi of Baroda, under whom I had the privilege of working as a post-graduate research student, I owe a special word of thanks; he was truly a guide and a friend to me during the years of our close association.

My debt to Prof. R.D. Ranade is immense. A mystic himself and not alone a close student of mysticism, he has by precept and example enabled me to make my *Analysis of Spiritual Life* as authentic and complete as possible. He has besides placed me under a great obligation to him by writing a generous Foreword to this book.

My indebtedness to Prof. R. H. Thouless and to William James in the second and third chapters respectively is too obvious to require any special emphasis here.

I have also pleasure in thanking my friends, Mr. Ganesh V. Tulpule and Dr. M. A. Karandikar, who kindly discussed with me some of the knotty problems dealt with in the book ; the Rev. F. H. Brown and Prof. T. Reuben, who went through the typescript and offered valuable suggestions; Dr. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, whose personal interest in the book was not a little responsible for its publication; and the Manager and Staff of the British India Press and Mr. G.R. Bhatkal of the Popular Book Depot for facilitating the printing and publication of the book.

Finally, I acknowledge my indebtedness to the University of Bombay for the grant-in-aid received by me from the University towards the cost of publication of this book.

V. H. DATE

LINGARAJ COLLEGE,
BELGAUM,
28 January, 1944.

1

Aim and Scope of Inquiry

1. Fourfold Approach to the Problem

THE AIM OF the following pages is to show that the spiritual life is an organic growth, which has its roots in the reactions of the sensuous life and its fruit in the realization of God. Indeed, rare is the person who is thoroughly and always satisfied with the perceptible, sensuous world ; rare is the person who thinks but is not troubled with the contradictions and perplexities of thought and life ; rare again a person who is torn internally and externally, but says without complaint or despair that in a godless world of chance and accident, one has to steer one's course as best as one can. Sympathetic thought and actual suffering do take a man beyond the meshes of the senses and bring him face to face with the fundamental problems of philosophy. But if sympathy, thought and suffering continue to penetrate his soul, he goes beyond mere philosophizing and begins to feel the thirst for a life which will console him and save him from the turmoils of the worldly life. The reactions of the sensuous life do not stop at merely creating a distaste for the worldly and a thirst for the non-worldly or the spiritual life. How to live the amphibious life of sense and spirit becomes a new problem to solve. In the fullness of time, the way to this knowledge of the Spirit is 'revealed' definitely as an act of grace from above. Silently and increasingly the soul makes continuous efforts in her struggle to meet the Lord. Taking the wings of morality and meditation, she hastens to meet Him, but finds herself unable to remain constantly with Him, so long as she retains her separate individuality. Ultimately, she makes a complete surrender of herself; but once she meets Him, He alone remains and there is no returning of her.

Such, in brief, is the outline of the story we are going to tell. It may be said that it has been told times without number and that there is no necessity for us to do so once again. We plead guilty to the charge so far as the material of the story is concerned. We have frankly and freely made use of the vast amount of spiritual literature of the saints in Mahārāshtra, but we submit that the structure created out of it ought to appear as solid, simple and inviting.

We are aware of our internal and external foes. The latter have doubted and rejected the facts of religious experience on several grounds. Religion, they say, is due to fear; it confuses natural phenomena with gods; it is nothing but anthropomorphism; it consists mainly of illusions, aberrations and abnormalities; it is a way of satisfying the sex instinct; it stands as a symbol of superstition, is incompatible with science, and even consists of deliberate lies and hypocrisy. Our friends and admirers, too, unconsciously act the role of internal enemies, because they speak without knowledge, confuse superstition with fact, and the simulating with the real. We shall try to refute all these charges against religion and religious experience by pointing out unambiguously and definitely that we are dealing with facts and not with chimeras.

Our present study is neither hortatory nor apologetic; it is a rationalistic, critical, though sympathetic, examination of the facts of spiritual experience as recorded by the saints, with a view to finding out the real and the abiding in that experience. And inasmuch as the Real from the metaphysical point of view is also the Real from the experiential point of view, we are also concerned with the pointing out of the practical way in which the Real, as the Ideal, will gradually be realized. In other words, we shall deal, first, with the philosophical problem of the nature of spiritual experience, and find out the criteria by which the mystical Reality will be distinguished from the non-mystical or pseudo-mystical mass of experiences; secondly, with the equally important psychological problem of the development or the growth of spiritual life; and thirdly, with the moral and devotional preparation as well as with the characteristic marks of the saintly life. The Analysis of Spiritual Life will therefore be dealt with from four points of view, philosophical, psychological, ethical and mystical. This attempt to present the structure, the mechanism and the function of the spiritual or mystical life is, we think, with the exception of Professor R. D. Ranade's most worthy and monumental work on "*Mysticism in Mahar̄ashtra*," probably the first of its kind in India. The West has produced a vast literature on the philosophy and psychology of Religion ; and it is a matter of great regret that, as yet, no serious attempt has been made in this field to present the Indian point of view in a manner which is at once unbiased, critical and truthful.

2. The Appropriate Method

Those who consider that religion is altogether a social phenomenon may do well in adopting the method of statistical averages or the questionnaire method in discussing some such problems as, whether conversion is an adolescent phenomenon or not, and whether religion and magic are the same in essence or different. Ames, Jevons and Durkheim, for instance, take this view of religion. To quote Prof. Ames, 'Religion is the consciousness of the highest social values.'[1] However useful it may be to consider religion as having a social origin, one sure consequence of it is that the social origin itself is used as a proof that religion today is an anachronism ; that the collective consciousness in which religion originated is, as Conford holds, on a plane much lower than reason.[2] Pratt too admits the possibility of the rise of religious ideals and feelings in the individual without the intervention of social influence, and illustrates it in the case of two deaf-mutes, Mr. Ballard and Mr. D'Estrella. The latter, Pratt tells us, thought the moon to be a ball of fire which some strong man, who was somehow hiding behind the skies, tossed up every morning and caught in the evening by way of amusement.

It would be idle and impossible in our present study to bring under review and advance criticism against what these social psychologists have written about religious problems. They have, many of them, left the grain and pounded the husk. To us, religion being primarily a direct personal affair with God, the social problems appear to have value only as a background and an environment. Man being a social animal is certainly indebted to society for the opportunities he gets to show his moral and spiritual worth. But on no account can it be said that the personal life of communion with God or of ecstasy is a social function, or that the distinction between the sacred and the profane is a social distinction. The real object of worship is always God or the God-like man, and never the society, as Durkheim wishes to make it. For society is composed of good and bad men, of saints and sinners and of believers and unbelievers; and though it sounds well and is a fine manner of speaking that we should worship God in the form of society, the fallacy which is often committed is to worship the society, (and we wonder if this would be possible without the prior worship of God) and to forget God. As Rāmadāsa tells us, we must make the distinction between the ordinary man and the man who has realized God. To be truly useful to society after one has realized God, or to derive the social benefit for one's own moral and spiritual preparation is one thing ; to deny and forget Him by being fired with the enthusiasm of social consciousness and of physical health is quite another thing.

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[1] *Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 168 (quoted by Pratt).

[2] From Religion to Philosophy.

The spiritual life mainly consists of the apprehension of God and of the silent meditation on His name. Obviously the statistical or the questionnaire method is useless to find Him out or to solve the various problems which arise in connection with this unique life. If the questionnaire is at all to be addressed, it must be addressed to the saints; but they are not to be found in numbers, and in particular places which are accessible to all. The existence of a saint is a rare phenomenon ; the discovery of him is rarer still. The only way in which we can discover the secrets of the spiritual life is carefully to study the literature of the saints, and then, by applying the comparative method, to discover the facts of that life and to formulate out of them a philosophy and a psychology of religion. It is by comparing the experiences of different saints that we can have greater evidence for arriving at a particular conclusion. If identity of ideas is discovered amidst diversity in other respects, such as age, clime, language, etc., we have the greatest evidence for the truth of those ideas. For example, if the saying of Tukārāma, 'We have to fight day and night', is compared with a very similar saying of St. Paul, 'I die daily', we get the conviction that the spiritual life must be a life of perpetual struggle. The more the comparison the more the freedom from subjective prejudices, and the more the objective validity we have regarding the facts of spiritual life. In the words of Stanley Cook, we get 'the unbiased co-ordination of all the comparable data irrespective of context or age.'[1] Again, as the spiritual experience is amenable to growth, evolution and organization, we shall employ the genetic method also. In the absence, however, of one's own experience, it will be most difficult to employ this method and say with confidence anything about the different stages of spiritual growth. How far we have been successful in this our attempt is not for us to say.

There is no room to incorporate discussions about some of the outstanding problems of philosophy. We shall say almost nothing, for instance, one way or the other, regarding the problems of life after death, reincarnation and the theory of Karma. Much can be guessed and said about them on either side. We are concerned with the facts of the spiritual life and with no guessings regarding matters which hardly touch that life. This may perhaps offend some of the best Indian intellects who pin their faith above all to the sayings of the Lord, Srī Kṛṣṇa that He and Arjuna had gone through many previous births, and that perfection is possible after a number of births. The saints also have occasionally spoken in the same strain, but the motive is to make the people (and this is the motive of the *Bhagavadgītā* also) all the more spiritually-minded, and thus enable them to try to live the really immortal life of God-realization and thereby put a stop to the round of births and the bondage of Karma. The beliefs in the doctrines of rebirth and Karma have been utilized by the saints as spurs for the progress of the moral and the spiritual life, and not allowed to endure as mere strongholds of Indian Philosophy. We do not know if they may be valuable as pointing to some objective validity corresponding to them; but they are, whether believes or make-believes, of the utmost value as means to an end. At the dissolution of the universe, there might be the Brahmanic state for all; but who would like, asks Rāmadāsa, to become a king when all the armies are dead ? Rather, one would enjoy the kingdom when everything else is existing. Rāmadāsa goes to the extent of saying that the hard cash-value of the Brahmanic experience, which can be had in this very life, is incomparably superior to the possible, shaky, credit-value of the same, in a distant life to come.

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[1] *Encyclopaedia of Ethics and Religion*, X, p. 664.

In his book *The Idea of Immortality*, Professor Pringle-Pattison rightly argues that the highest ethical conceptions are independent of all considerations of future rewards and punishments; and he tries to prove this by pointing out that the high moral standard of the Old Testament or of the Stoics was possible without any belief in a future life. 'From the point of view of psychology,' as W. B. Selbie points out, 'the really significant fact is the tendency to see in the hope of immortality, a moral incentive and a means of redressing the many imperfections and injustices of this mortal life.'[1] If we are hardly justified in assuming that, in the absence of a belief in a future life, the whole moral foundation of the universe will crumble to pieces, much less shall we be justified in assuming that without such belief there will be no spiritual life. On the contrary, our beliefs in a future life and in the theory of Karma, owe all their strength and value to another logically prior belief in the permanence and reality of certain spiritual values, such as Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

It may appear that we have assumed the existence of God. For the purpose of our thesis, it does not matter whether we believe or disbelieve in Him, though it is indeed desirable to believe. It is immaterial whether the merit of a physician is believed or not by the patient; it is sufficient if he takes the medicine, provided, of course, it is vouchsafed that it will cure the malady and conduce to health. Even so, it should not matter if an aspirant who wishes to know God does not believe in Him; for He can realize the life of the Spirit, provided he follows the instructions of the spiritual teacher. He will realize God; and in the act of realization will lie his argument and proof for the existence of God. The so-called arguments of God can be met with antinomies as every student of philosophy knows; but the experience of God will be the only proof without any contradiction, at least for him who has that experience. The spiritual life is a great experiment, in the data, the procedure and the method of which one must have an initial faith, as is required in testing any scientific hypothesis. Even in the process of that experiment itself and not at the end alone, as is the case with the experiments of science, one begins to realize that 'to know God is to become God.'

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[1] *Psychology of Religion*, Ch. XIV.

3. *Religion and Sex*

It is widely known that the psycho-analysts consider religious consciousness as sexual in essence. William James has once for all pointed out conclusively in his 'Varieties of Religious Experience', that the two kinds of consciousness are diametrically opposed to each other in respect of objects, moods, faculties and acts. Professor R. D. Ranade has also conclusively pointed out in his 'Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy,' that the sexual pleasure can never be the unit of a Beatific calculus. He holds that the relation between the religious and the sexual consciousness in only analogical.

It should be noted that the libidinous energy is one form of universal energy and not the whole of it. That is why the sex-impulse is capable of being sublimated and transformed for the service of God. This is how Kānhopātrā could transfer her love to God. The spiritual energy too, if not kept under control, may seek to get itself released with force and speed; and just as water takes its most natural and easy course, similarly the spiritual energy may find an easy outlet through the sexual apparatus. That is why some of those who have gone high on the spiritual ladder fall suddenly and violently.

The sex-instinct is the greatest urge in human life. It should to a certain extent be satisfied before one can ordinarily expect some progress in spiritual life; and yet, progress in spiritual life is possible only when the sexual appetite is brought under control. Rāmadāsa tells us in clear terms that one, who has developed aversion (Vairāgya) in respect of objects of sense (including sex), can alone hope to have spiritual knowledge, and warns us in equally definite terms that if anyone, being deluded by the false impression that he has attained to liberation, were to lose control of his senses and indulge in pleasures, he would never be free from the torments of the mind. Apart from its being a great counsel to us in the moral field, this utterance of Rāmadāsa serves the purpose of bringing to our minds the fact that the sexual and the spiritual are two entirely different urges, which pull the mind as in a game of tug-of-war, in opposite directions. The gain in the one is the loss in the other, and *vice versa*; so that, on no account can we have a general assimilation and an equation of the two, in their respective functional values.

The mind, says Rāmadāsa in another place, ascends, or descends spiritual-ward or sensual-ward, according as it becomes identical with the spiritual complex or the sensual complex. And he says in another context that the only thing about which great caution is to be exercised by one who performs Kīrtana is to have absolutely no reference to sexual matters; for in that very moment, the audience also will be sexually-minded. Without any hesitation, the saints have unambiguously proclaimed that excepting the necessary, moderate satisfaction of the sexual desire which is guaranteed by the institution of marriage, any further indulgence in any form of it by word, thought or deed is absolutely taboo in the spiritual life. They advocate the ruthless suppression and the burning of the sexual passion by the fire of meditation, if it outgrows the legitimate, moderate demands. They are not apprehensive like the psycho-analysts who fear that the suppressed emotions may gather strength in the ante-chamber of the mind and surge up with explosive force in the consciousness in moments of weakness. From the viewpoint of the saints, there need be no such fear in suppressing the exuberance of the sex-instinct. For in the first place, it is to be buried deep; secondly, the mind has a substitute to think about; it is given to meditation; thirdly, the meditation itself releases such an amount of spiritual energy as is able not only to counterbalance the sexual, but to absorb and utilize it for its own progress; and lastly, God himself cuts the desires of the devotees by his grace. As against this, to give full scope to the free expression of the sexual desires is to put a stop to the spiritual progress.

4. Relation of Magic, Science and Art with Religion

We shall now discuss the mutual relations of magic, science, art and religion, remembering all the while that by religion we do not mean the faith of a particular community or a country, but a man's quest for understanding the nature of the power which controls the universe and the way to participate in that power more and more. Not being anthropologists ourselves, we are not concerned with the problem as to which of them was practised first, and which afterwards. Our interest lies in determining the nature and scope of each one of them, so that our knowledge of the spiritual life will be free from confusion, uncertainty or doubt.

Let us begin with the relation of magic with science. Both of them try to have a control over Nature. To that extent, we may call magic as pseudo-science, and science as "sympathetic" magic. Magic is concerned only with the acquisition of power; science both with knowledge and power. Science is concerned with the extension of the range of the knowableness of the universe; magic is indifferent to this question. Magic aims at securing for man a direct control over the natural phenomena, so that he can have more and more the pleasures and comforts of life, by vanquishing his enemies, by possessing the friendship and the companionship of the persons whom he loves, by having good harvest and progeny, and by being able to secure both health and wealth. Thus, it appears that its functions are at once productive, protective and destructive. All the same, it is concerned more with the affairs of an individual than with the interests of the society as a whole. A magician works like a solitary man; he keeps his spells, rites, and all his magical substances as guarded secrets, and performs the ritual of uttering the meaningless terms of the spell-formula as far as possible in a place unknown to anybody else. Hardly there exists any friendly relation or any co-operation between one magician and another. Mostly all of them are at logger-heads with each other, intent on nullifying the effects of the magic of others by his own magic. Nay, it cannot be even said that he is the master of his own magic. For, though, in a sense magic is a pragmatic art, the magician always runs the risk of making it his own enemy, in case he repeats the formula even with a single mistake. It enrages the spirit he invokes, and he falls a victim to the wrath of that spirit. For instance, a story is told how when a person who ought to have prayed to the Goddess by repeating the formula 'Let the goddess Bhairavī protect (Rakṣatu) my wife,' repeated it by substituting unknowingly the word 'devour' (Bhakṣatu) for the word 'protect', and actually lost his wife. The single unconscious mistake of uttering 'Bha' for 'Ra' cost him the life of his wife. Besides, the magician may find himself weak before other magicians and suffer a great defeat or ruin at their hands.

When the magician is thus engaged in his own personal ambition of gaining power, wealth, and fame by pretending to possess an occult control over the spirits, magic is bound to be a fraudulent art of deceiving his customers by a chance success here or there. He has neither the scientific attitude, nor the joy of an artist, nor again the freedom and the peace of a religious soul. How can his magic then lead to scientific or spiritual truth which is objective and universal, or be the cause of a work of art, like a beautiful statue or painting which is the embodiment of some permanent meaning, or create out of it an attitude of faith and love, or a belief in a Supreme Being who is all powerful, kind and merciful ?

Like magic and science, religion too is concerned with the acquisition of power and knowledge, but it is the Divine power and knowledge, and not the physical or psychical. The control of nature is not sought at all; though sometimes, a sort of objective control and supernatural powers, resembling the occult, come of their own accord as by-products of a life of intense and unceasing devotion to God. Every great saint is reported to have caused miracles; but as Rāmadāsa tells us, it is not the saint who performs them; they occur by the grace of God. Similarly, once the saint knows the nature of the Universe, it matters very little for him, if the range of its knowableness increases or decreases in dimensions The nature of mystical reality will have no corresponding changes. God, he knows by experience, is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. As we shall see in detail in the chapter on 'The Nature of Spiritual Experience', there is nothing in common between the physical object and the spiritual object. Again, from the point of view of science, the object of science is something which is perpetually 'other' than the subject; from the point of view of religion, the object though remaining as the 'other' is also one with the subject. The subject itself becomes its own object. Further, the object of spiritual experience is capable of producing emotional reactions, the object of science may yield only intellectual pleasure. Peace in God, the grace of God, and the Beatific raptures are unknown to science.

There are some anthropologists, who being struck by the superficial resemblance between magic and prayer, hold that magic is the crude and original form of prayer. They forget that the motive behind magic is to astound the people by its miraculous effects and to gain fame and money for oneself, while the motive in all the genuine prayers is to know and participate in the nature of God, though the desire for the material well-being of oneself and of the society is not absent. No doubt many of the Vedic prayers aim at obtaining material prosperity, and some of them verge on being on a par with magical spells; none the less about the majority of them we can say that they are intended to seek the pleasure of the deities whom they propitiate, so that in course of time they might be able to show their devotees the way to attain the highest Reality. One who prays necessarily depends on the grace of God for acquiring knowledge, for protection and for all he wants; but one who is interested in magic or as a matter of that, in doing some service to a deity out of compulsion in order to ward off some danger and obtain the desired objects, is in need of the power of that deity, and not the pleasure and the grace, much less the knowledge of the supreme God. And, if there comes about a miraculous effect or happening, the magician thinks that it has occured on account of his power, where as the servant of God thinks that it has been done by God in order to increase his faith and devotion for God. If however the motive of the devotional prayer also becomes unfortunately the motive for working out miracles, prayer too will soon degenerate to the level of magic.

After having disposed of the relation of magic with prayer, let us now turn our attention to the relation and the distinction between science and religion as also between art and religion. We have however to keep in mind not only in this connection, but also throughout our study, that by religion we do not mean a particular faith, but the common and the universal bond of lasting kinship between man and God. Religion, in the ordinary sense generally means a faith in a theological doctrine which has come to stay by the force of tradition. It is more or less an unverified dogma and consists of certain customary ritualistic practices, adherence to which is very often due to blind credulity. The religion of which we shall be speaking is the mystical type of religion by which is meant, to put it in the words of Professor R.D. Ranade, "a direct, first hand contact with Reality." It is this religion which is one and common to all the humanity, and it is with reference to this religion and to the object of this religion, that is God, that we shall speak in comparison with science and of art. We shall however very often use the word 'Spiritual' instead of the usual word 'religious' to denote the difference between the common and the specific meaning of the word.

In the first place, religion resembles both science and art. It has got a scientific approach and method, and aims to arrive at certain definite conclusions and laws regarding the working of the spiritual life and God's relation with man and the world. Like science and art it too has necessarily to do with man and the outside world. Like the scientist, the religious man also must be both analytic and synthetic in his outlook. Collecting first the several instances of the facts and phenomena of the religious consciousness, he must then sift and classify them into such groups as are either due to tradition, custom, superstition and blind faith or as arising out of doubts, enquiry, intelligent study, moral conduct and spiritual discipline. He would observe directly the concrete day-to-day mode of living of the great saints by coming in contact with them, and note down their various experiences and utterances indirectly through records and biographies of them. Then alone will he be able to give up many of the imaginary hypotheses and much of the loose, fashionable and abstract talk that goes on under the guise of spiritual knowledge. Quacks and scoundrels there can be many in the spiritual field, as there have been, for instance, in the field of medicine. They would recommend the use of drugs in place of meditation and promiscuous mingling of males and females along with dance and music instead of the contact with the good and the holy and of the singing of the glories and the Name of God. There can hardly be any holiday or short-cut to the moral and the spiritual life. And so, the only royal but the most difficult road to the realization of God is that of devout, silent and constant meditation on the Name of God, as also an undeviating contemplation on the vision of God. This is the only means of attaining the supreme joy and peace which would bring about the communion and the unity of man with God. Finally, there comes about the discovery that God's love for man is infinitely greater than man's love for God. All this is the result of a scientific search in the secrets of the spiritual life which are hidden from the view of the priest-craft and of the amateur triflers in the realm of religion.

Yet, in the second place, there is the difference in the ways in which science and religion react on the individual soul. The pleasures and the joys of the material prosperity, ease and comfort afforded by all the research and progress in science are enjoyable only when the body is sound and healthy and the mind is free from cares and anxieties. Otherwise, even the most affluent circumstances become an additional cause of dissatisfaction. One who has lost his appetite is likely to become unhappy not only because he is himself unable to digest rich and wholesome food but also because others are able to relish it. How can one who is in deep sorrow appreciate music ? On the contrary, one who is soaked in spiritual experience will be immensely joyful even when others enjoy a good dinner. This is because he looks to his fellow-beings not as contrasted with him, but as his equals, on account of their being related to him through God. No doubt, in a sense the growing science of today is also a cohesive force on account of which peoples of different nations are coming closer and closer and are compelled to feel that they have to live together in spite of various differences. But it is the men of spiritual inclination amongst them who can be said to have felt the impact of divine presence as the root cause of their love for mankind. Science has succeeded in bringing forth immense wealth in the form of various instruments which can usher in, as man would like, an era of peace and prosperity or of doomsday and destruction. It will be given to men of piety and insight into the divine plan of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth to say how the results of science have to be used for this purpose. One must be grateful to science, but must put his trust in the saint to lead him across the river of worldly temptations, sorrow and dangers to the peaceful haven of God.

In certain other respects also, science and religion fall away from each other. Observation and experiment which a scientist employs are with reference to facts and phenomena which are other than the scientist himself. Even the science known as psychology of Religion which deals exclusively with religious phenomena cannot be said to be the direct transcript of what actually takes place so far as the process of growth of religious consciousness is concerned, but is merely an indirect report of it in general and abstract terms. None can become endowed with mystical experiences by merely reading or writing a book on the psychology of religion. Even a thorough-going sceptic can do so, and yet remain a sceptic. In short, scientific knowledge is like a mirror which tries to reflect the reality as far as it is possible; while the religious consciousness can have no meaning unless it becomes gradually and approximately the Reality itself. Here, the experimenter, and the thing experimented upon become one and the same. Or, to put it differently, as the saint Jñaneśvara says, the traveller and the road on which he travels become both of them the destination towards which they go.

Besides, the objects of science are amenable to change and are spatial and temporal in character. The objects of mystical experience are not limited by space and time, and are eternally the same even though they appear as changing. Uncontaminable and indestructible is the Reality of religious consciousness; it has no now and then; and it is here, there and everywhere at the same time. Neither telescope nor microscope will show it as having different dimensions. It differs in every way from the sensible object as we shall have an occasion later on to say about it in greater details. So once again, we come to the same conclusion, that science might give all ease, comfort, and worldly prosperity to those who are physically fit to enjoy, but neither their souls will have peace, nor God will be felt as the necessary companion in their lives.

So far as Art is concerned, it appears to have a close relation to religion. Both appear to be more synthetic and subjective than analytic and objective. Facts and phenomena of nature have meaning and relevence only so far as they have direct bearing upon the imagery and the feelings of man. More than in the general laws, both art and religion are interested in the unique qualities of individual experiences which make men in general more humane, sympathetic, magnanimous and knit together. Whereas the scientific theories and hypotheses are many a time disproved or superceded, art and religion endure, though they are sometimes eclipsed by lethargy or antagonism. Out of their original subjectivity they create an objectivity which becomes valid and permanent and goes beyond the past and the present and becomes a model for the future. Both art and religion become a sort of bridge between the individual and the universal experiences; and as it becomes wider and wider, more and more universal will be the values which will make both of them more and more lasting.

Art especially will never be outdated even though it might become out-moded. Fashions may go out only to return after some time. For the creativity of art lies not only in imagination but also in reproduction; and yet like the mystical religion, the realistic art has to do more with perception than with conception. 'Paint me as I am,' warned Cromwell to the artist, fearing perhaps that the latter might idealize him and create a false picture. Even so, would a God-realized man describe his experience in as exact and precise words as is possible for verbal imagery. A statute of a handsome Socrates will be bad even as a caricature; even so, description of an egoistic and jealous saint will be self-defeating. What is required for good and lasting art as well as for genuine and eternal religion is the passion for seeking truth and the zeal to stick to it, though this might be anathema to the voluptuous many. Then alone will art and religion not be restricted in a man here or a man there, but will be recreated in all those who will come in contact with them or with their products and achievements. Participation in art does not mean mere passivity; it makes the participator an active and willful agent. The artist and the saint stand singled out not merely as symbols of their art and religion, but as eternal torch-bearers of their meanings and values.

With all this, the saint has to leave the company of the artist, since after producing his work of art the artist lives his own life so to say independently of his art, while the saint cannot live away from his divine experience even for a moment. The saint is what his experience is; without that there can be no saint. The painter and the painting live and do not live in each other, just as the off-spring and its mother live for some time together, but not always. The painting reminds us of its painter no doubt, because he lives forever in it; but the painter and the painting are not one. Even so, the sculptor and his sculpture, the musician and his music, and the actor and the role he acts are not one and the same. This cannot however apply to the relation between a devotee and God, though according to the deists and the theists the two have to remain as two separate and distinct entities. If God is the whole and the sole meaning and the result of devotion, how can the saint, as we have said above, remain totally apart from God at any time of his life ? The more the devotion, the more the experience of God, and the more the identification of the devotee and God. The devotee grows into Godhood, as the seed grows into a plant and the plant grows into a tree. In short, the life of devotion is not like the looking at the reflection of one's face into a mirror, but the carving out of one's own self-luminous face which is nothing else but God.

Art appears to come very near to religion, on account of its creative instinct and imaginative faculty; and when the word "intuition" is substituted for the instinct and the faculty, it becomes very easy to say that art and religion are one and the same thing. We have to point out that religion has nothing to do with imagination; on the contrary, imagination is the hallmark of unreality. Again, it can hardly be said that the spiritual object is created; it is only a discovery or a recognition of what is only potentially cognized. The intuitive faculty of mystical religion is dormant in all, but roused in the case of a few by the grace of God. The intuitive faculty of art, which is a convenient name for the exceptionally fertile imagination or inspiration, is not known to be so awakened by the intervention of another. It is natural with the artist, and is therefore bound to be more subjective than objective. The intuition of religion is universal and objective, the same for all in spite of its being subjective.

2

Dogmas and Puzzles of Spiritual Life

A. The Dogmas of Spiritual Life

A DOGMA IS generally understood to mean as an unreasoned assertion about a belief, which then becomes a source of fanaticism as time passes on. But this need not always be the case. There can be dogmatic assertions of wise men too. To them they are matters of fact, and expressions of concrete experience, though they go beyond the comprehension of ordinary men. An expert in a particular field of experience can alone understand what another expert in that field says. To others it may look like an unmeaning jargon. Even so, a saint alone can understand another saint, though both of them may differ from each other in every other way, such as language, time, place, country, caste and creed. Therefore, so far as the spiritual life is concerned, one ought to be patient enough before running to the conclusion that such and such a statement is dogmatic and therefore unworthy of being attended to. On the contrary, he should humbly approach those who know the matter sufficiently well, and learn from them what it means on the face of it and what it really implies. Many a time, there is much to be understood than what meets the eye and our other senses. Only then it will be possible to read between the lines and come to a sort of comparative estimate of two or more saints of the world.

1. The Dogma of Initiation

With this in mind, let us decipher some of the basic dogmas of the spiritual life. First, then, with the problem of initiation of a disciple into the spiritual fold by an able teacher. Is it very necessary that one must know the secret of spiritual life from another ? Will not self-seeking and self-efforts enable him to know what God is and how he can be realized ? This seems improbable, though there have been saints in whose case there is no reliable evidence to show that they got their spiritual knowledge from a teacher (Guru). But then, we cannot also say that they themselves were responsible for having it. In such cases, we shall say nothing one way or the other ; for thereby we do not prove anything for or against. But in the majority of cases, at least in India, the grace of the Guru is considered as being absolutely necessary for bringing about the connection between the seeker and God. To say that like anything else in the world, man too is necessarily and already connected with God is a truth which cannot be denied ontologically. But to say that a man as a seeker of the Kingdom of God is connected with God by another person, who is firmly established as a powerful link with God, is a truth which has to be accepted as altogether a new fact of the spiritual life of that man, which is no longer static but begins anew as a process. As a metaphysical fact, man might have been created by God; but with the initiation in the spiritual fold, and with the practice of the moral and the spiritual discipline, he becomes capable of gradually learning that he is not only a creature of God but the rightful heir to the Kingdom of God.

Now even supposing that there is no need of the regular act of initiation, and that conversion, instead of being gradual might take place, as in the case of St. Paul, in a sudden or catastrophic manner, there is still the necessity of someone imparting to the person concerned what it all means. When St. Paul saw on his way to Damascus 'at mid-day a light brighter than the glare of the Sun', he asked the vision before him as to who He was. And the answer came, 'Saul, Saul, it is I whom thou persecutest.' This clearly shows that even the sudden conversion from Saul into Paul required the intermediary agency of another person, namely, of Christ himself, and that the divine voice was itself the act of initiation which revealed the presence of Christ. Had there been no such voice, we wonder if Saul would have been converted at all. The initiation, then, either by God himself, or by one who has realized God and has got the sanction of God for baptizing people into the divine fold, is the first and the foremost step in spiritual life. The saint who has realized God is an embodiment of God and owes his power of saving others to God alone.

Naturally, the divine Name which is imparted to the seeker as the representative symbol of God comes directly from God only; it is neither given by the saint at his own sweet will, nor chosen out of the innumerable names which are written in books, and which are, as Rudolf Otto says, nothing but dead letters on a parchment. This only means that the Name should come as far as possible out of the mouth of a living saint, since it is capable of being received by the seeker with faith and hope. If, however, there is a seeker who with full faith believes that a Name which has been used by saints before him would work equally in his case, we feel that he will not be wrong in thinking that he is initiated by that very Name by which the saints who had meditated on that Name were saved. Nay he will not be wrong, even if he would meditate on the name of that very saint; for, as said above, the saint derives his saving power from God. Thus, one can be either Christo-centric or Pauline-centric, Rāma-centric or Rāmadāsa-centric, though Paul and Rāmadāsa happened to be great devotees of Christ and Rāma respectively. The servant of God becomes as powerful as the Master.

The act of initiation however need not be confined to the imparting of the divine Name only. Meditation on it will no doubt lead one to have the vision of God. But, it involves very often a lengthy process comparable to the journey made by an ant. So, the teacher might resort to another method which is far quicker than the first, and on account of which the journey can be compared to the flight of a bird, which in no time takes hold of the fruit on a distant tree. The Upaniṣad tells us how the sage Uddālaka tried to teach his son, Śvetaketu, the nature of the ultimate reality or the Brahman by means of suitable illustrations. Nine times did the father try to instruct the boy into the lore of the Brahman by analogical arguments; but seeing that he failed to convince him, he must have made his son able to visualize the Brahman directly, just as the Lord, Kṛṣṇa, enabled Arjuna to visualize the Universal Vision of God in the very moment He was requested to do so; or just as, the Christ manifested himself in the form of light before St. Paul even when the latter was not initiated by means of the imparting of the Name. 'That thou art' is the Upaniṣadic teaching. Here, 'that' means the Brahman which obviously must have been shown to Śvetaketu, and 'thou' means Śvetaketu himself. Then it was that he immediately said that he was none else but Brahman. All this amounts to the flight of a bird, as if; a conversion which is sudden like a jump, and not gradual like walking step by step.

Taking into consideration other points of view, the initiation might be said to take place in four different ways. It may be by an audible word of mouth, by touch, by sight, or by an act of will. The usual method is that the divine Name is uttered by the teacher and heard by the disciple who then fixes it in his heart, so that he can meditate upon it as many times as he likes. The second was used by the renowned saint, Swāmī Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa, when he enabled his equally renowned disciple, Swāmī Vivekānanda, to visualize the Godhead. Rāmakṛṣṇa simply touched the disciple, and the power to visualize the Divine was as immediately imparted from one to the other, as it was from Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna. The third was used, we think, by Śrī Aurobindo, the saint of Pondicherry, when he used to 'open' the hearts of hundreds of people by his penetrating divine sight, as they all took their turn, one by one, in looking at him for the insight into the spiritual world. And, the fourth is possible even by the mere wish of the Almighty or of a great Guru, when even a broken instrument may work exceedingly well; the greatest sinner may turn into the greatest saint, and a persecutor of the Church may become the greatest upholder of it. Christ merely wished and St. Paul was converted.

We need not stop to determine as to which of these four methods is the best. For they all aim at one end, namely to transform the vegetal and animal nature of man into one which is morally good and spiritually holy. The will to do so must be presumed to be there in the heart of every spiritual teacher. If then, he wishes to keep his disciples physically away from him, he might use the method of 'sight', but allow them occasionally to have a look at him and grow in spiritual wisdom, as was done by Śrī Aurobindo. Or, the teacher might awaken the

Serpentine Energy, known as 'Kuṇḍalini', that is, the spiritual energy which is dormant in every man, and make it rise gradually through the several plexuses of the body till it reaches the plexus at the top of the brain and enables the disciple to drink at the eternal source of joy and peace. This method is a peculiar mixture of Yogic exercise and devotion, and is practised in India since the time when the Nātha-pantha came into vogue (10th century AD). The hand of grace was placed on the head of the disciple, who then became immediately connected with the divine. A variation of this method was also available. The physical contact of the hand was not considered as an essential part of initiation. Its place was taken by the imparting of a 'mantra' which was usually a divine Name. Or, the method consisted of both the imparting of the Name and of the touch of the hand of grace. This school of the Nāthas exists in India even today and is doing as excellent a work as it had done in the past through its very great exponents, namely Macchindranātha, Gorakhanātha, Gahininātha, Nivṛttinātha, and Jñāneśvara. After these, Rāmānanda, Kabīra, Dādū, and several others in the north India, and Kāḍasiddha, Nimbargī Mahārāja, Bhausāhib Mahārāja, Amburao Mahārāja and Professor R. D. Ranade in the south India, have done immense spiritual activity during the last three hundred years. On the whole, what we are driving at by making this somewhat lengthy narration is that the initiation in spiritual life consists mainly of the imparting of the divine Name. Slowly and gradually, it enables one to have the vision of God and to combine all the benefits of the initiations by sight, by touch or by the will of the spiritual teacher. The Guru does see the disciple at the time of initiation, and the vibrations of the sound of the Name which he utters are as good as his touch. Therefore it is that the divine Name is considered as supreme in bestowing the grace of God, and that the meditation on it as the supreme means (sādhana) of attaining to Godhood.

In short, the only rational explanation we can give about the act of initiation is that inasmuch as the actual concrete knowledge or realization of God goes far beyond the philosophical or intellectual understanding about him, it must be of the nature of light. And this too is no metaphor, but a fact. Naturally, to dispel the darkness from the mind of the disciple the light must be brought in by the Master. The candle which is not lighted must be lit by some other candle which is already flaming; and this other by some other flaming candle. And so, ultimately we must suppose that the very first candle must have been eternally self-effulgent. This first source of infinite light is God. All the other, innumerable intermediary lamps are both disciples first and spiritual teachers afterwards. It is such great saints who have kept the torch of divinity ever blazing, and it is they who then hand over the same to others from generation to generation. This supremely self-less task of revealing the Godhead through initiation is being perpetually done all over the world by the saints alone. As there is no difference between one flame and another, there cannot be any fundamental difference between one saint and another, and between the saint and God, or between the teacher and a full-grown disciple. To put this in the words of the great mystic, Śrī Śankarācārya, the teacher gives everything he possesses to the disciple without even touching him, in order that the disciple should become equal to his Guru. The initiation works like the miraculous stone which turns iron into gold; man attains Godhood; the least of the servants gets the keys of the kingdom of God.

2. *Dogma of the relation between Name and Form*

We pass on to the other two great dogmas of the spiritual life, namely, the relation of the divine Name with the Forms of God, and about the relation of both Name and Form with God himself. Why should the repetition of the Name of God result in the manifestation of his Forms; and why should along with the Form it is desirable to meditate on His name ? Is God known by these two attributes only in the Spinozistic sense of Substance and Attributes, or is he also known in some other ways, and yet remains ever transcendent ? For Spinoza, God or Substance has infinite attributes, though man has a limited capacity to know him only through two attributes, namely, thought and extension. Mind and Matter consisting of thought and extension, respectively, are thus to Spinoza two aspects of one and the same substance or God. To Tulasīdāsa, a great saint of North India, Name and Form are the two media in which God manifests himself to his devotees. Tulasīdāsa means thereby, like Spinoza, that God transcends them infinitely. But whereas in Spinoza, in spite of his Substance being one, there still lurks the dualism of mind and matter, or of thought and extension, in Tulasidāsa or in the case of any other great saint in India, there cannot be any difference between Name and Form, since a devotee who meditates on the Name visualizes several Forms of God, and one who contemplates on the Forms is fortunate to hear several divine Names. That is why the content of initiation is either the Name or Form. And, that is why, one becomes able to make the easy transition from thought to extension. The Name is nothing but an idea or thought, and the vision an extended form. Incidentally, this goes to show that from the spiritual point of view there is no dualism at all. Any one vision of God or any one Name of Him is capable of producing out of it, in course of time, innumerable visions and sounds of Names, which have been visualized or heard till now by great saints all over the world.

According to the Indian saints, the manifestations of God are not however restricted only to names and forms. He may manifest as innumerable musical notes, as the sound of thunder or of the roaring of a lion, as beautiful colours, as fragrant smells without flowers, as suprasensuous joy, as overflowing energy, or like the calm of the sea, a blissful presence.

All this is bound to appear as dogmatic to those for whom the spiritual life is a taboo, and for those who are too self-centred and immersed in worldly pleasures to think of any other thing, who take pride in being too rational about all things in the world, and who therefore can never afford to be humble except when they are miserable and weak to face the buffets of ill-luck. If the reason in man does not teach him at any time in his life to give up the arrogance of his intellect for a while, and sit with humility and faith at the feet of those who have seen and owned the treasures of the supramental, supra-intellectual and supra-sensuous world of the Spirit, the doors of the Kingdom of God would be forever closed upon him. Let him therefore tentatively at least, and in order to make an experiment regarding the truth or otherwise of the so-called facts of spiritual life, get himself initiated in that life by a powerful Master, and go by the ethico-spiritual path as dictated by him. Then alone will the dogmas appear to him as the simplified facts of a new and lovable life. If there is a person who has never experienced what sweetness means, there are only two ways of making him understand that sugar is sweet. One is to make him taste honey and then to tell him that sugar has a similar taste. This is the speculative method of reason and inference, of analogy and imagination which is commonly used for going from the known to the unknown. It grinds exceedingly well both in the practical daily life and in science. Innumerable discoveries have been made in science even by analogy and imaginative hypotheses. But no amount of reasoning or imagination will enable a person to experience the sweetness of sugar on the basis of his experience of the sweetness of honey. For that, he has to eat some sugar. None can feel the same intense grief of bereavement of another person even if they be the most affectionate and sympathetic friends of each other. When this is the case with our ordinary experiences of life, how much more will it be difficult for anyone to participate in that unique experience of ecstasy of a saint, which transcends all the known worldly joys and pleasures ? That state of unitive bliss can never be attained by being learned and proficient in the verbal knowledge of the scriptures or of the various sciences, unless one goes by the way in which the saints have gone, and learn for himself the art of discovering and befriending God.

B. Puzzles of Spiritual Life

After having mentioned and explained the importance of some of the dogmas of the spiritual life, let us also do the same with reference to some of the puzzles or antinomies which might crop up and bewilder an aspirant who has begun his spiritual journey. No doubt, we shall try to solve the riddles when we come across them in our further study. But, no matter if we make certain repetitions even at this stage, in order to remove some of the hurdles or doubts which might assail him, and hamper his progress afterwards. It must be noted that all these puzzles and doubts arise on account of several reasons. Too much of superficial reading of whatever is handy, hasty conclusions, impatient belief in those who have no insight, prepossessed notions, ignorance of context, usage of language, and the comparative degree of trust-worthiness or competence of the contending authorities in giving their own interpretations, are some of the prominent reasons which give rise to these antinomies or the riddles of the spiritual life. Their solution lies either in their being a whole truth of which the contradictory parts are complimentary of each other, or in a truth which goes beyond them.

1. First regarding the puzzle about the relation between God and the Guru. We have said in the preceding section that the Guru is an intermediary between God and the disciple and at the same time an embodiment of God. The saints too are not unanimous on this point so far as the expression of it in language is concerned. Tukārāma implores the saints to plead on his behalf and request the Lord to take pity on him, since he feels that unless they become intermediaries, God would simply become cold and indifferent to him on account of his being a sinful and a fallen man. Kabīra prefers to bow down first at the feet of the Guru, even though the Guru and the Lord, Govinda, are both standing before him; for he knows that it was the grace of his Guru which enabled him to have a look at the vision of God. Kabīra makes his Guru as superior to God, though he admits that the Guru was an intermediary in bringing about the contact between him and God. Rāmdāsa equates the Guru with God, though he declares lesser gods and goddesses as being inferior to Guru, inasmuch as they can be seen and pleased by the power of the chanting of certain hymns and 'mantras'. Faith and love for the Guru must be as strong as they are for God, says he. While, as against all those views, Patañjali, the author of the *Yoga-Sūtras*, holds (I.26) that God is the Guru of all other Gurus.

Now, all these four statements appear to be contradictory. But they are not, since each one of them contains an element of truth, as also a point of view from which the relation between God and the Guru is looked at. Tukārāma is correct, because he knows that God as the Supreme judge will not let him go without being punished for his faults and sins. Kabīra is correct, because he knows that without the grace of the Guru none will be able to have the vision of God. Even so, Rāmadāsa is correct because he knows that the Guru is Guru on account of his having himself realized God and of his power to make others realize Him. For him, there is no difference between God and the Guru, except that while the Guru is embodied, God is not. In fact, none of them or none of the other great saints of the world tells us something new which is not known or accepted as true by other saints. They have only emphasised one or the other aspect of the whole truth. And, naturally, none of them will have any hesitation in accepting what the great sage Patañjali has said, namely, that God is the ultimate Guru of all. What makes the saint as the Guru is the constant presence of the vision of God within and before him, and not his body or anything else that belongs to him.

This will remove, we suppose, the silly notion of the common run of people that the Guru is the individual human personality, and with this remove the equally silly practice of making too much of only the physical body of that Guru. No doubt, there is sense enough in trying to please the Guru by showing reverence to the temple of God, namely, the physical body of the Guru, and in doing service to him; but one must always remember that the body or the temple of God is different from God. We grant that even the physical body of a God-intoxicated saint becomes itself divinised and remains so, as long as he lives. But when the body dies, the Guru does not die. For what made him Guru while he was living, namely, the vision of God, remains eternally immortal behind him. And, if the divine vision which he always used to see as being omnipresent as also transcendent and immanent was of his own bodily form, then what would eternally remain after his death is that very divinised bodily form of his. It is this divinised form of the physical body of the saint that constitutes the Guruhood or the Godhood, whether the saint is living or dead. God takes the form of the body of the saint and appears before him as if he is the reflection of the saint in a mirror so long as the saint lives. This perhaps is the reward of God for the saint's love for God. But unlimited is the grace of God; and shall we say in the words of Rāmadāsa that unlimited too is his gratitude also for the saint. For he continues to appear eternally in the form of the saint before any one who is deeply devoted to the saint, even after the saint is dead and gone. So, ultimately, it is God alone who makes Himself like the saint by divinising the body of the saint when the latter becomes God-intoxicated, and it is

God who manifests himself before the saint in the form of that very saint while he is living, and manifests again and again in the form of the saint even after the death of the saint. People may think that the saint has resurrected; but it is God who makes the show. The saint was resurrected from the tomb of his body even while he was living. For from top to toe every pore of the saint's body was filled with the self-effulgent divine presence. It is therefore God who is the ultimate Guru of all the Gurus.

Notwithstanding this intimate union with God, the saint behaves with Him always with the utmost humility and devotion of a loyal servant. God, on the other hand, being pleased with the saint hands over unto him the keys of mercy, grace and of the entire treasure of spiritual experiences. It is on this account that the grace of a living saint must first be sought by one who wishes to know and realize God. The saint has the power of God; but he has the human heart also. While dealing with the miserable, the sinners and the ignorant, who approach him for being saved he does not hold the balance of justice; he extends his hand of sympathy and compassion, and begs of God to save them all by the touch of His grace. And, when he gets the divine sanction, he initiates them with spiritual instruction and brings them on the path of God. This supreme task of saving the mankind is being perpetually done by the saints all over the world, in the role of the Guru; and so, they are said to be greater than God. But ultimately this eulogy too is offered again by the saint at the feet of the Lord; for it is He who lives in him at all time.

2. We have solved one great puzzle. And this will enable us to solve two more puzzles without much trouble. Lot of energy and scholarship is spent on both sides in proving that final liberation is possible on this or on that side of death. Those who interpret 'Videha-mukti' as meaning 'liberation withou body' that is liberation after death and consider it as the only form of liberation after which there will be no rebirth argue that the very existence of the physical body is a standing block to liberation, inasmuch as the body itself is the result of the past karma, and that there would be no true liberation till this last vestige of karma namely, the body falls down. Those on the other hand who interpret the word 'Vi-deha' as meaning

'without the consciousness of body' think that liberation is possible even while one is living provided he does not, at any moment of his life, identify himself with bodily existence, but, on the contrary, is constantly aware of the divine presence only. This naturally includes, according to them, even the negation of the consciousness of identification of one's own being with the senses and their objects of desires, as well as with the mind, the intellect and egoism. Thus, Videha-mukti becomes just another name for 'Jīvan-mukti', that is, liberation while one is living.

Now, as there is an element of truth in both the views, it becomes a problem as to which of them one should accept as absolutely correct. If liberation after death were to be the correct view, then the identification of the soul with the Brahman, which is considered as the highest aim of human life, loses much of its importance, and the man has to wait with irksome patience for the on-coming death in order to get himself liberated. And, as there is no possibility of any direct evidence in this matter, that is, of what might happen to the soul after death, it is somewhat hazardous to place one's faith entirely in the only logical argument that Karma and its effects are opposed to Jñāna and are therefore obstacles to liberation. Besides, will not the person continue to do certain actions in spite of his knowledge of Brahman, and will they not bind him ? If it be said that the fire of this supreme knowledge will be able to nullify the effects of the future actions, it does not stand to reason why it should not nullify the effects of the past actions also, and why the body should be considered as an obstacle. The Bhagvadgītā (4.37) tells us that the fire of knowledge burns all kinds of actions, whether past, present or future. St. Tukārāma also tells us exactly the same thing. And, who knows that even a saint may not fall from the high pedestal of knowledge till the moment of his death, by being slothful and vicious ?

If on the other hand, liberation were to mean Jīvan-mukti, it will not only not exclude Videha-mukti understood in the sense of the condition of going beyond the consciousness of body, senses, mind, intellect and egoism, but will also possess the testimony of the concrete experience of some one. Every moment of absorption either in the meditation on the Name of God or in the contemplation on the vision of God, or on both, is a moment of the liberated life, a moment of contentment, joy, and peace. Even during that precious little time, the soul becomes free from the consciousness of its being a tiny individuality made up of egoistic desires and anxieties, pleasures and pains, of hopes and frustrations. Uncontaminated by this all and by other environments and situations in life, the liberated soul lives, like a lotus in water, in perfect enjoyment of the company of the saints and of the visions of God. He neither waits for the body to fall, nor is anxious to prolong its life. Even while he lives he knows that his body is like a slough of a snake which is to be given up one day or other; and though he makes the utmost use of his body for doing meditation and other spiritual activities, he neither fondles it too much nor feels that it is like a dead weight on his soul. Such a man alone can be said to possess a body and not to possess it at the same time. He alone is at once a Jīvan-mukta and a Videha-mukta.

3. As for the problem whether God is Personal, Impersonal, that is Saguṇa or Nirguṇa, we have implicitly said a little above that he is saguṇa, since it is he who assumes the forms of the various saints and manifests before them as an act of grace, and has also justice, mercy and love. If we take into consideration several other spiritual experiences due to divine presence, such as light, sounds, colours, fragrance, beauty, splendour, and several other visions of stars, Moons, Suns, as also of animate and inanimate objects, we are constrained to say that God is nothing if not saguṇa. It is a pity that not being in the least acquainted with these lasting mystical experiences, one should declare with the arrogance of his intellect that all this, in spite of its appearance, is nothing but a fleeting show on a par with the transitory objects of the sensible world. They are not like so many images in the temples carved out of stone or metal for the purpose of worship, and are therefore said to be saguṇa. As we shall show in our chapter on 'From Idol-worship to God-realization,' these visions and experiences of the presence of God differ in essence from both the material objects and their representations by way of memory and imagination. They are neither created by the mind nor are capable of being perceived by the senses. They are the contents and the constituents of the divine presence and are given by God for the

devout soul to perceive by the supra-sensible intuitive eye. The only common characteristic between these divine visions and the sensible and mental objects is that they are manifold. No doubt, they also appear to be changing and short-lived. But this is not so. They disappear only to appear again and over again, and then become permanently fixed. In short, they are not the work of Māyā, but are manifestations of the dynamic personality of God in so many forms everyone of which constitutes a saguṇa, but at the same time, an imperishable and eternal incarnation of God.

Though saguṇa, every one of such divine visions can be called to be nirguṇa also, not in the sense that it is bereft of form or qualities, but in the sense that it is not limited, either by its perceived form or quality at a particular time. It has the power to change itself into any other form of different dimensions and shapes, and into qualities which might be diametrically opposed to those which were originally seen. That is why, it can be described not only positively that it has this or that quality, or this or that form in the moment of its being perceived in that way, but it can also be described negatively by the famous Vedāntic formula, as 'not this, not this', since it may not continue to show itself in one form or quality. If Nirguṇa were only to mean that the Absolute or God is utterly incapable of having any form or quality, then we do not know the manner of its existence, nor have any reason to say that it exists. It is not at all necessary, we hold, to posit behind the saguṇa something which is without form and quality, and then to say that the saguṇa arose out of it. The same Being can be both Saguṇa or Nirguṇa, God or the Absolute. It was exactly this idea which Śrī Śaṅkarācārya has several times expressed in his works by saying that the Nirguṇa Brahman becomes Saguṇa for the sake of the devotees. Saints like Ekanātha, Tukārāma and Tulsīdāsa have unmistakably said the same thing by identifying the two aspects of God. Rāmadāsa deserves the palm when he says that Nirguṇa is nothing but the assemblage of infinite qualities (Nirguṇa means bahu-guṇa: Bahu-many), and that for understanding the nature of Nirguṇa one must have the experience of Saguṇa. In another context he tells us that in the very place in which the devotee sees nothing at first, he sees the fullness of divine splendour. This only means that God who was nirguṇa and therefore invisible first, became at once for the sake of the devotee visible by assuming a pleasing form. Or to put it differently, what all this comes to mean is that God who is unmanifest (Avyakta) first becomes manifest (Vyakta) afterward; or that God who is 'arūpa' (formless) and 'aguṇa' (quality-less) and 'a-nāma' (without any name) assumes rūpa, guṇa and nāma. This indeed must have been the meaning we think, of what the Upaniṣad says that "There was nothing in the beginning ; out of that came the Being."

4. Corresponding to the confusion between the meanings of saguṇa and nirguṇa with reference to God, there exists another confusion between what is spoken of as saguṇa Bhakti and nirguṇa Bhakti. As we shall say something about devotion while dealing with the problem of Idol-worship in Chapter II and again in the Chapter on Types of Devotion, we shall simply say here as to what constitute roughly the two kinds of devotion, though, as we have said above, there is no fundamental difference so far as the Personal and the Impersonal aspects of God are concerned. Devotion which is concerned with the meditation on the Name of God as it is imparted by the Guru who must have himself realized God, and steadfast contemplation on the visions of God amount to nirguṇa bhakti. All other innumerable forms of devotion, such as going to temples and the worship of the idols, mental visualization of the same, reading of spiritual literature, singing of praises and prayers to God, constitute the saguṇa bhakti. As it is exceedingly difficult for anyone to get himself engaged in doing the nirguṇa bhakti which lacks all signs of exhibitionism or flutter about it and which must be carried on as silently as possible, resorting to the saguṇa bhakti will be highly useful as a great support for meditation and contemplation in that it will create the congenial atmosphere and the devotional mood and the attitude of the aspirant.

5. Another confusion which has been made current by the mere theorists for the popular mind is that the real saint is he who behaves equally with all. To support their view they cite the verse from the Bhagavadgītā, (5.18) which says that 'The realised souls see the same (Brahman) in a Brahmin endowed with knowledge and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog and the man who lives on the flesh of a dog.' But they forget that

what the verse says refers only to the quality of 'seeing the same or the identical Brahman' on all the things as referred to in the verse and that it does not refer to the equality of behaviour or treatment which they recommend to all. It must be noted that though 'sama-darśana' that is, the seeing of 'sama' meaning the Brahman as referred to in verse (5.19), can definitely be had on all the things in the world, the behaviour with each one of them might be different. The vision of Brahman can be seen on the blazing fire, but who will embrace it with the affection of a friend ? The same vision can be seen on the body of a learned and holy Brahmin as well as on the body of a dog or elephant no doubt; but who except an idiot will place the rich and wholesome dish meant for the Brahmin before a dog or an elephant ? To give the same treatment to all means to disrespect them who deserve to be respected, and respect them who do not deserve. This is mere stupidity and no sign of intelligence; much less the sign of saintliness. Samadarśana is compatible with the Viṣama-vartana ; one who has realized God must also behave differently with different persons, as they deserve.

6. Similar is the confusion made by the false Vedantins who say that one who has realized God goes *ipso facto* beyond the considerations of good and bad, right and wrong, and beyond merit and demerit. And the reason which they adduce for their opinion is that God or the Absolute is beyond all such duals. No doubt in a similar strain, the Gītā also advises Arjuna to go beyond all duals as also beyond the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas, which constitute the Māyā. But in doing so the Gītā has taken utmost precaution in advising us again and again to go by the moral path, to keep a strict control over the senses and the mind lest they might go astray; to keep the intellect and the will steadfast and resolute; and to maintain constantly the virtues of sattvaguṇa as also an undeviating love and attachment to God. This is not going beyond the moral distinctions of good and bad or of merit and demerit. On the contrary, it means the deliberate observance of them all with full attention and will; otherwise there will be no unflinching attachment to God. Nay, even after one has realized God to some extent, he must always adhere to sattvaguṇa and to the moral path in order that he should gather sufficient strength to tread on the steep path of the Spirit, and

to prevent from suddenly falling to the bottom of sin and vice. He must always be alert to see that his moral stand is not compromised at any stage of his life. Otherwise the evil desires and the temptation of the tamoguṇa, and the indiscrete enthusiasm and activity of the rajoguṇa are waiting there for an opportunity to dislodge him from the position of sattvaguṇa. In short, it will be most dangerous to hold that the saint can behave in any way he likes, because God whom he has realized is beyond all things in the world. God is beyond in the sense that he is uncontaminated even though he is immanent in all things. He is immaculate, and hence the form of the vision of God is not burnt by fire or moistened by water, or swept away by the wind. The saint has a body which will be burnt by fire, drowned in water and blown away by the fury of the wind.

So, what is meant by saying that the saint goes beyond good and evil is that the ecstatic condition which he attains while he is deeply absorbed in meditation on the Name of God or in the contemplation of the divine visions goes beyond good and evil. It is during that condition only that his body is as good as naught; for it is then only that his mind and senses are fully converged on the Name and vision of God. Then alone, like a lotus in water, can he be said to be uncontaminated like the divine presence before him. At all other times, he cannot but be more or less conscious of his body, mind, senses, intellect and egoism. How can he not then be conscious of the distinctions between good and bad and how will it be possible for him not to avoid the bad and follow the good, unless he is interested in doing the bad and the wrong things only ? The way for going beyond good and bad does not lie through what is bad and sinful, but by side-tracking the bad and by going through the good towards something which is supra-good, namely, the presence of God.

7. Finally, there are some who have raised the doubt whether it would be proper and beneficial to get oneself initiated with spiritual instruction unless one is first thoroughly equipped to do so by being morally virtuous. One must become sinless first; and then hope to have contact and communion with God. The temple must be made clean before God can be expected to occupy it. Now this is correct, no doubt, so far as the attitude and as we shall see in another chapter, the moral

preparation are concerned. Indeed, the soil must be made soft and fertile before the arrival of the monsoon and the sowing of the seed. God would certainly like to remain in the house which is already kept clean for Him to enter. But this is not the whole truth. Morality may be considered as autonomous; but to suppose that it will be perfected and maintained in that condition without any crack by the human will alone seems doubtful. The moral law as the expression of a dictate of conscience or of the social will, need not be based on the divine sanction; but the fulfilment of it against the severe temptations in life is almost impossible to be achieved without the grace of God. It requires the courage of Tukārāma to decline to accept a great treasure which the King Shivāji had brought to him as a present, by saying that 'gold and silver are no better than a clod of earth' to him, or to say to a wily woman who had approached him with a sinful motive, that for him all women other than his wife were as adorable as the Goddess Rukmiṇi. But this became possible for Tukārāma, because he had then attained to the status of a great saint. For the same reason, it became possible for Śrī Amburao Mahārāja, the saint of Inchgiri to denounce the idea of accepting a portion of the money which a man was to get out of lottery. 'That is a kind of theft,' he said; 'to rob several others, and to become rich oneself.' Not to have any idea of greed for possessing what belongs to others even in the most trying circumstances is therefore the sign, we think, of the moral fibre of man strengthened by the spiritual insight in him. In short, what we hold is that there cannot be any moral perfection without the support of the power of God-realization.

Even supposing that one can increase his moral worth by enhancing his sattvaguṇa and making it predominant over rajas and tamas, without the help of God, what the Gītā tells us (14.6) is that the sattvaguṇa itself binds the man with the egoism of having knowledge and joy. Fetters of gold are fetters still; and so, none will be able to go beyond the sattvaguṇa by developing it till it creates egoism in him. A contact with God and the saints will alone wash out this stigma of egoism. Besides, at what period of life, will a man be able to say that he is morally perfect? For, that constitutes a life-long struggle, which cannot be without lapses and set-backs. And it is exactly here that the grace of the Guru and of God can come to his help.

Let not therefore anyone entertain the false notion that he can first be thoroughly sinless by his own efforts, and then seek the spiritual enlightenment. Let him be sinful and conscious of his sins; but if he really wishes to be free from them, let him come in contact with someone who has realized God. The Lord Kṛṣṇa has given us the assurance in the Gītā (9.30) that the greatest of the sinners will be saved by His grace, if he begins to lead the life of devotional meditation on the Name of God. There is therefore all the more justification why a sinner should make haste to win the favour of God. He need not feel the shame that he has not cleansed the temple of his body for welcoming the entry of God in it. Let God enter into the temple, though there would be dirt of sins and darkness of ignorance in it. He will kindle the light of knowledge (B.G. 10.11) and will himself remove the dirt of sins for the sake of his devotees. The sinner will be the saint. And, as Rāmadāsa says, the greatest of the sins consists in being away from God, what more spiritual benefit shall there be for the sinner if he becomes united with God?

3

Religious Belief

1. *Pragmatism, Theism and Mysticism*

RELIGIOUS BELIEF MAY take two forms: the belief regarding the mere fact about the existence of God, and the belief regarding not only about the existence but also about the nature and the knowability of God. He may exist, but may not be known at all, or He may be known in His existence and His nature as well. We are not concerned here with the worn-out, dry discussion of the so-called standard arguments or proofs of God's existence. They only give, as E. Bevan puts it, 'rational comfort to people who already believe in God.'[1] An agnostic of the Lockeian type may also believe in the existence of a being, whose nature he may not know, or may not care to know. We are not concerned merely with this type of belief, which is only an intellectual luxury or pastime. Rather, our interest being in the growing appreciation of and participation in the qualities of God, we are concerned in this chapter with the grounds of justification of our belief in the knowability of His nature or qualities. Now, the Divine qualities or the nature of God cannot simply hang in the air; they must belong to a god that exists. Neither can there be any meaning in the bare fact of the existence of God, unless, on account of His qualities or nature, He is related with the moral and the spiritual values of mankind. Our religious belief, in short, if genuine, must go beyond our mere subjective leanings and notions, and point out certain definite facts having an objective validity which can never be doubted at least by those who have an experience of them. At the same time the religious belief must go beyond the mere pragmatic desirability of the consequences which follow from it; it must be a true belief. 'Thus conduct which flows from the belief that God is love,' says Bevan, 'is not only the best kind of conduct, judged by the scales of human values, but is also the kind of conduct which corresponds best with Reality.'[1]

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[1] *Symbolism and Belief*, p. 386.

From the view-point of Pragmatism a true belief is that which works, or results in the right sort of conduct. 'But the fact that we attain our purposes,' says Bevan, 'does not prove that the supposition on which we act is true, since a right course of conduct may follow on a false supposition.'[2] It is just possible that falsehood may work better, as it does work better with propagandists and sellers of patent medicines, who know nothing about their efficacy. If workability is the test of truth, we are landed in a realm of probability and relativity. The proposition that "God is merciful" may work well for the time being ; but in view of the problem of evil, it may be looked upon as only probable. While if we take into consideration the ancient belief in the wrath of God which coerced men into good behaviour, there would be another equally true proposition, *viz.*, 'God is wrathful.' Now the objective truth of these two propositions remains a matter of indifference, so long as the beliefs in them 'work', and are therefore taken for granted as true.

Theism alone believes in a God who possesses a number of qualities and is at the same time a fit object of worship and reverence. But the theistic belief is said to be anthropomorphic in character, and the imputation to God of certain powers and qualities is believed by the critics of theism to be due to human need. 'All personal theism is, in a sense, anthropomorphic.' says Dr. Farnell ; 'for we can conceive of God in terms of our own faculties, and in the light of our emotions and our moral, intellectual and spiritual experience.'[3] Now if theism is

[1] *Ibid*, p. 332.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 300.
[3] *Attributes of God*, pp. 21-22.

to be reduced to anthropomorphism, and 'if you went on with the process and removed from the ideal of God everything which you knew as a characteristic or constituent of human personality, you would have nothing left at all. God would be for you only a blank. It would not be worthwhile your saying that you believed in the existence of God at all, any more than you believed in the existence of X'.[1]

If the objectivity of the theistic belief is thus virtually to be condemned and rejected on account of its being anthropomorphic in character, religion will be no better than poetry and art which will give all the emotional thrills and the sense of meaning, even though there is no kind of Reality beyond to which they will point. A religion which consists of mere 'numinous' feeling, however valuable, or a religion which does not point out an immense Reality behind it, is on a par with music which may give us pleasure, but which may mean absolutely nothing. We may have mere intellectual concepts of God, but, really speaking, no God; mere symbols, but no actual truth. The attributes of Potentia, Sapientia and Bonitas, if we are at all to supersede symbols by precise apprehensions and to avoid the pitfalls of agnosticism, pragmatism and anthropomorphism, must signify our belief in a dogma, which, according to McTaggart, has a metaphysical significance.

To save religion both in its dogma and feeling and to be able to speak of God as having attributes as a factual source of the various emotional reactions, we must back up theism by mysticism, a philosophical justification of God by the mystical perception of him. Only then our religious belief will not be a hazard, but an unerring source of blissful knowledge and action.

Mysticism being the direct, first-hand contact with Reality, any faithful account of that must constitute to the mystic and those who pin their faith in him a body of truth which will never be assailed. Let us consider the same proposition 'God is merciful' from the point of view of mysticism. To one who has seen God and has had the fortune of further having an experience of His mercy, and to one who has reason not to doubt the veracity of the first, God and His mercy are not simply matters of blind faith, but of faith based on experience.

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[1] *Symbolism and Belief*, p. 254.

The belief in the proposition does not mean a belief in a possible or hypothetical God and His mercy of the same type, but means a prior belief of someone who has had the actual experience of a real God and a real mercy, and a posterior belief of other men who have sufficient reason not to doubt the veracity of the person who had that experience. For St. Paul who saw the vision on the road to Damascus as being 'brighter than the glare of the sun', and who became convinced by hearing an equally objective voice that the vision was no other than the Christ, the facts of God and of his grace were actual apprehensions and not merely inferential conjectures. And again to those readers of the Bible, who see no reason to bring in question the veracity of St. Paul, the experience represented by the words 'brighter than the glare, etc.' is almost, if not equally, as objectively real as it was to Paul. With Paul's experience admitted as a basic fact, with the vision and the voice as mystical Reality, the meaning of the expression 'brighter than the glare of the sun' is believed in by the readers of the Bible as more than empty symbolism or the frenzy of the brain. But if the experiential support of the mystic is taken away, the belief is likely to shatter into pieces, and the expression regarding the experience will only appear as a fine piece of verbal imagery, corresponding to and transcending which there may or may not be any Reality. The imagery as a work of art may be highly pleasing and useful too, but may connote nothing in reality.

Take away the experiences of the mystics who have recorded them from the earliest times of human history all over the world, take away the visions and the voices due to which the mystics tell us authoritatively of the various attributes of God, such as Beauty, Power, Glory, Wisdom, Mercy, Grace, Love, Goodness, etc., and theism, in spite of its brilliant speculative adventures, will have absolutely no answer to the charge of anthropomorphism which is often levelled against it, *viz.*, that the theistic attributes of God are nothing but the human attributes raised to the degree of perfection. This charge appears to us as the deadliest of all; for anthropomorphism does not straightway deny or doubt the existence of God as scepticism or agnosticism does, but silently and under the garb of an ally cuts away the very foundations of theism, by first allowing a man to worship God and to admire the Divine attributes and then blaming him for doing honour to a being who is fashioned after the image of man. It would not serve any purpose simply to say that the charge is unintelligent. As a matter of fact, without the basis of mystical experience, theism has no answer to this charge. It remains unrefuted ever since it was put forth so admirably by Xenophanes. 'If oxen and horses had hands, and could paint with their hands and produce works of art as men do, says the Greek philosopher, 'horses would paint the forms of the gods like horses, and oxen paint like oxen.'[1] If at all we wish to refute it, we can only hope to do so with reference to what the mystics have said; for the mystics have the authoriy of experience for what they say.

The traditional, bitter voice of anthropomorphism will be silenced once for all, and the theistic belief upheld as durable for all time to come, if, in the light of mystical knowledge, a new meaning is discovered out of the old phraseology of anthropomorphism. If the attributes of God are imagined to be after the fashion of the attributes of man, the charge of anthropomorphism will remain for ever without an answer. But if the same are considered as mere pointers to the supra-sensuous, undefinable aspects of God, constituting mystical experience, but which are, somehow, for the sake of intellectual apprehension and social communication, represented by the inadequate but workable human language and imagery, then anthropomorphism is a bulwark of theism and the expression of nothing but truth. We must learn to distinguish henceforth anthropomorphism of the imaginative type from anthropomorphism of the representative type. The one imagines a god and his qualities which may or may not exist, the other gives a faithful, though poor, representation of the mystical experience. Mere imagination may lead us not to God but to the devil; the faithful representation has no other choice but to fall back upon the experience of the mystic. It is the description of what is remembered as having been experienced actually by either the person who describes the qualities of God or by another on whose report we can rely with confidence. The description of God and His qualities which have been matters of first-hand, direct experience, differs from the description of God based on imagination, to the extent to which introspection or retrospection differs from prospective or speculative guesswork.

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[1] Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 110.

Accordingly, if the author of the Bhagavadgītā depicts in energetic language the vision of the Universal Ātman, consisting of innumerable eyes, hands, etc., as extremely terrific and attractive, and as varied in forms and colours, it is not the imaginative, poetic type of anthropomorphism, but rather the realistic, representative type which is responsible for acquainting us with the nature of mystical knowledge. It is not the human quality of mercy or cruelty that is first raised in imagination to the highest degree and then conceived as belonging to a supreme and powerful being, imagined and called as God; it is the Divine attribute of grace or wrath which becomes first a matter of experience, and then, for the sake of understanding, is mentioned in the human language as love or anger. That is why the mystic alone speaks as certainly of the wrath, the cruelty and the terrific aspects of God, as of love, mercy and the pleasing aspects of Him. It is not the fancy of man which describes God as one who loves and protects the good, or as one who being wrathful destroys the wicked; it is rather the description of the experience of the fact that He behaves so. Arjuna, for example, is convinced of the fact that God is both fearful and loving, because he actually saw in the vision of the Universal Ātman that his foes were being crushed in the terrible jaws of Death, while he himself was assured by the vision that he alone would be saved on account of his devotion. The author of the *Saptaśatī* has described the Goddess as one who has mercy in her heart, but who exhibits her fierce nature and cruelty on the field of battle.

The propositions, therefore that "God is merciful", 'God is wrathful', 'God takes the form of Viṣṇu with four hands', 'God appears as a swan, or as a star, a cross, crescent moon, a hog, a lion, a horse, etc,' are not, as Xenophanes suggests, anthropomorphic in character, because they embody the idealization of an imagined form or quality of God, but are the approximate crystallization in intellectual form and language of a truth which must have been experienced by the mystics. If the name is to be retained at all, it will be altogether a new kind of anthropomorphism, whose function will be not to imagine but

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faithfully to represent what has been experienced. We may designate this new kind of anthropomorphism by coining a new word, *viz.*, 'Mysticomorphism', just as Canon Streeter has coined the new word 'Mechanomorphism' to designate Materialism or the attempt to fashion the infinite in the image of a machine.[1] To sum up, it is this new form of anthropomorphism or Mysticomorphism which saves us from scepticism on one hand, and hollow theism on the other, and grounds our religious belief on the mystical experience of the saints.

2. Criteria of Religious Belief[2]

Let us now examine the elements which go to form the religious belief of the ordinary man and see how far they are sound and free from danger.

The Traditional Element

When there is no reasoned demonstration of a belief, the usual way in which it is transmitted is by means of some authority. Whether the authority is of the elderly persons in the family, or of teachers in schools, or of prominent people in the society, or of some religious head, the mind, receives certain suggestions which, in course of time, are hardened into a belief. The mind, too, becomes increasingly suggestible, and, as Dr. Rivers has pointed out, responds immediately and unquestionably to the commands of the authority just as the soldiers do when their suggestibility is heightened by the military drill.

This mode of maintaining a belief by means of authoritative suggestion and unquestioned obedience in response to it is highly useful in bringing the members of a group under one person or in binding them together by a common idea or group of ideas. The important point, however, is that the binding force does not lie, as is falsely believed, in merely the superficial points, such as the virtue of obedience or the force of suggestion, but in the central fact of the truth of the idea itself, which is known to the person in authority but mostly unknown to the followers. The soldiers obey the general and carry out his command. It is necessary, indeed, that the soldiers should be obedient, and the general powerful and unhesitating in giving the command. And yet, if the command be detrimental to the cause of the country for which the soldiers and the general fight, it may not continue to be obeyed for a long time, except for the fear of death. There may be a revolt in the army, the moment it is discovered that the command embodies a false plan and is not consistent with the ideas of patriotism and duty. The passive acceptance of the voice of authority is possible, so long as those who command and those who obey are bound by the common idea, because the truth embodied by it is the common objective which is dear to them all. Those who command have realized it; those who obey have to realize it and hope to do so by relying upon their superiors.

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[1] *Reality*, p. 9.

[2] The five-fold classification of the religious belief is that of R. H. Thouless, though the treatment is different.

This will to realize that which has been realized by the superiors is the secret of belief in authority, of hero-worship, of the traditional form of religion. So long as power and knowledge combine in a particular person or institution, there is smooth sailing in spite of inequality; but the moment there is cleavage between the idea and the power necessary to enforce it upon others for a common good, there appear the signs of revolt. The ideas, instead of being the symbols of some objective truth, become mere empty shells, and yet are felt to be so dear on account of custom or tradition, that persons or institutions in authority are tempted to protect them with fanatic zeal, even using physical force. This was exactly how the Papal authority was overthrown; this is exactly how people who have a respect for the autonomy of their own character revolt against those who abuse their power in the attempt to preserve the dead skeletons of ideas from which truth has escaped.

So far as religion is concerned, mysticism alone cannot be rusted by tradition, and so can wield a powerful influence on all. For it alone combines symbolism with truth. If it further combines with these the physical power of the State and the moral and intellectual powers of the Church, there will reign a Theo-polity on this very earth. The torch of mystical knowledge will be handed down from the teacher to the disciple as if by tradition, and be kept permanently burning. The Reality and the symbols of it will be kept so closely together, that the Reality will not be lost sight of in the idle pursuit of the symbols; nor will they be utilized for the purpose of coercing the ignorant into blind following. They will never be so overworked as to lead to a rebellion in religion: if they be shown by a person who has the authority of experience that they have a Reality beyond them.

The Natural Element

That Nature is the garment of God, the mirror in which you see His reflection or image, has been the persistent argument of philosophy and poetry. That Nature itself is God, that natural beauty is Divine beauty, that the appreciation of the beauty of the face of a woman is the appreciation of the beauty of God, are further extensions of the same argument. Originally there arises some vague but wholesome feeling at the sight of the beauty of Nature; and, as Thouless points out, this serves as the raw material out of which the belief in a God that satisfies the aesthetic sense is produced. The belief is then dissociated from the feeling in which it arises, and takes on an intellectual form either at the hands of a philosopher,or a poet. But as we have observed before in this chapter, the belief of the philosopher even of the theistic type, or of the poet, may have either mere dogma or mere feeling for its support and may thus shatter into pieces if it be no more than anthropomorphism. In the case of the poet, especially, who is merely struck by the beauty and bounty of Nature, the intellectual mould of his feeling is still more unsound.

The danger inherent in this aspect of the religious belief, which is not based on mystical experience but on a mere poetic feeling, may well be brought out by a passage from Thouless's *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Ch. III.; 'To the unreflective man, healthy in mind and body and not much burdened by ultimate moral problems, the optimistic attitude is a natural one. For him there is no conflict when he sees Nature as the face of God. The matter is however different with the sensitive soul of the Buddha, tortured by the sight of the misery and cruelty of the world, or of St. Paul acutely conscious of sin in himself and mankind. To such mentalities Nature is not good. For them the experiences we are describing (*viz.*, of having intimate personal relations of awe and love with Nature) would come into conflict with the stronger experience of pain and evil.'

The mystic alone has the capacity to go beyond these apparent conflicts and to formulate his belief, if he philosophizes at all, on the strength of his synoptic, persistent and transcendent experience of God. Both the beautiful and the ugly, and the lovable and formidable aspects of Nature are reconciled in the mystical belief, because the mystical Reality is found by the mystic as presenting these elements in it.

The Moral Element

The experience of the moral conflict, according to Thouless, tends to result in religious belief in two ways: firstly, by 'objectifying the two sides' of the conflict, *viz.*, the good and the evil, into a God and a Devil respectively; and secondly, by the 'practical necessity of keeping men good,' by conceiving God as a moral Lawgiver and Governor of the Universe.

The weakness of this aspect of religious belief does not lie, as is very often said, in making God an external authority, as if authority and compulsion from outside have something bad about them, but in the identification of God with moral goodness. No doubt prominent psychologists like James and Coe attach a high importance to the moral element in religion. James especially finds himself absolutely unable to understand a conception of religion in which the ideal is not a moral one at all. As a matter of fact, if religion is indifferent to morality why should we need religion at all ? To treat God as the highest sanction of morality is certainly a wholesome attitude of the mind. But what of those who lead an exceptionally good moral life, because they need it to satisfy their conscience, or because they treat it as a part of the social adjustment ? To those who do not believe in a life to come, which will be adjusted and balanced by the Divine interference, but who derive all their sanction for morality in the individual and the social conscience and the mutual adjustment of the members of a society, the belief in a watchful and just God is a superfluous though not an absurd notion of the mind. From this point of view there is neither a moral element in religion, nor a religious element in morality. The two beliefs, if genuine, ought to stand separately, or fall separately, if not genuine. This is again another extreme, to think of religion and morality as absolutely divorced from each other.

The profound sense of the moral law written in the human heart led Kant to believe in the implicitly ethical character of religion. He felt that the reason for this belief was practical rather than theoretical ; and it was such an unshakable belief of Kant that he thought it was impossible for him to conceive of any religious experience which was devoid of the moral one. And yet, as Clement C. J. Webb points out, Kant contradicts himself : "His own sentiment towards the sublimities and ingenuities of nature really implied the existence of something other than what is distinctively ethical."[1]

Kant is accused of having committed a logical contradiction; but he could not help doing so, in view of the practical nature of his moral belief. It was this practical insight into the nature of the moral law and of religion that saved him and the world from scepticism and nihilism. From the mystical point of view Kant's error will be all the more justified. The moral goodness is only a part of the nature of God. Power, Wisdom, Wrath, Beauty, are, for example, attributes which go beyond the province of ethical values. Even the goodness of a good man is an infinitesimal part of the goodness of God. 'Can the love of God be compared with the love of a mother ?' asks Rāmadāsa. 'The mother may kill the baby in times of difficulty; God will never do so with His devotee'.[2] Experience of the mystical Reality as the highest Good is the only ground on which the moral belief can be justified.

Let us consider the point in another form. The moral consciousness does involve the sense of being alive to sin; and to a certain extent the consciousness of actually being, or of the possibility of being, a sinner, has a high moral value. But 'an exaggerated horror of sin' is not desirable from the view-point of spiritual progress. For, as Thouless puts it, it 'tends to produce an unhealthy and morbid attitude of mind which fails to be an incentive to goodness.'[3] There comes into operation the 'Law of Reversed Effort' by which the remedy itself becomes an obstacle, or the idea or plan which we wish to cherish or execute defeats itself, on account of the emotional reactions against it. The very idea that one may fall from a height, says Thouless, and the very effort to save oneself may precipitate the fall. Similarly, too keen a consciousness of sin may not relieve the person from his sins at all, as was probably the case with Bunyan.

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[1] *Kant's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 205.

[2] *Dāsabodha*, IV.—8, 24-25.

[3] *Introduction to Psychology of Religion*, Ch. IV.

This unduly exaggerated consciousness of sin suggests the lack of faith in the qualities of mercy and power of God and of God-like persons. The religious belief suffers in quality to the extent to which this extreme consciousness of sin becomes a part of our moral consciousness. In order to ward off this danger latent in the moral element of the religious belief, Lord Kṛṣṇa gives us assurances like "Even a sinner of the extreme degree, if he only meditates on Me, should be considered as a good person; for he is on the path;' 'Surrender unto Me; I shall relieve thee of all thy sins.'[1] The saints too have again and again told us that mountains of sins will be burnt by the power of meditation. Meditation on God and the consequent grace of God do away with the need of repentance for the sins. This does not mean that repentance is not considered as a necessary and useful part of the moral consciousness; it only means that repentance is not the exclusive sign of religious belief. Too much repentance without meditation indicates nothing but weakness and lack of faith in God.

The Affective Element

There is undoubtedly the emotive aspect of religious experience and belief. But distinction must be made between the emotions and sentiments which accompany or are the results of facts of experience, and those which arise merely in connection with religious cult and practices but do not necessarily indicate the presence of any such facts. The posture of kneeling in prayer, for example, has its effect on the emotions. It is not merely an outward symbol of submission, but, as Thouless points out 'it actually tends to produce the emotional attitude of submission.'[2] Howsoever highly serviceable for social purposes, the intensification of emotional experience by such practices may be in the life of a religious person without the actual presence of any object. It is probable that it may degenerate into mere sentimentalism, which may lead him to no action. The example given by William James of the Russian lady is a typical one of such sentimentalism. She wept over the troubles of fictitious people on the stage, while her own coachman was freezing to death on the pavement outside. The emotion of sorrow was to her an enjoyable state of mind; it did not stir her to action.

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[1] *Bhagavadgītā* IX, 30; XVIII, 66.

[2] *Introduction to Psychology of Religion*, Ch. V.

Besides, the emotions roused in the religious field must mainly be useful in that field rather than in another. If the act of kneeling enables us to know God and to be submissive before Him, then it serves a purpose ; if it enables us only to serve the society, without knowing God, there is no sense in saying that it is a religious act. On the contrary, if a saint were to prostrate himself before God, because he has been fortunate to have a glimpse of His glory, he too would experience the intensification of the emotional attitude of submission; but there would be no fear for him that the emotional energy would soon dissipate into nothing. God being the permanent object of his devotion, his emotions will be as steadfast as they will be intense and they will be permanently and fruitfully utilized for spiritual and social welfare. In his case, the experience of God, however small, will serve as a nucleus round which the emotions will gradually organise themselves and form into sentiments and character. Without such a tangible nucleus, the emotions will, every one of them, live a separate life, and be dissipated into nothing.

The mere feeling of the presence of God, of which we read in abundance in the mystical literature of the West, is no doubt a source of joy and comfort to the person who feels such a presence. But how long will one feeling be the support of another feeling? If we wish to maintain their permanence, both of them must be based on some concrete, permanent fact of experience. If there be no actual perception of God, the mere feeling of the presence of God, however strong and inevitable and however wholesome and joyful, may end in a mere religious sentimentalism which will be no stimulus to action or thought.

The Rational Element

The work of reason in all the human departments of knowledge is so obvious that it is superfluous to say that the intellect has an intimate relation with religious belief. It may be contended in keeping with the tendency of modern psychology that our beliefs are determined for us far more by irrational forces than by the intellect. Our feelings, wishes and emotions, as well as a host of unconscious desires and impulses, are said to be responsible for all that we believe. No doubt, there is an element of truth in this contention. Yet, on no account does it minimize the work of reason, which consists in formulating the justification or proof of what we believe. The genesis of our beliefs may lie in irrational sources; but the justification and the maintenance of them, as well as the refutation of counter-beliefs or no-beliefs is the work of reason. It may be contended again that a person who has the ground of experience for his belief may not require the intellect to prove his belief. Yet, so long as there is social intercourse and the need for argumentation and so long as books are being written and lectures are being delivered, the intellect will function without any challenge.

Those however who run to the other extreme and say that reason alone is sufficient to deliver the goods, and believe in a rational type of religion, are, as Thouless says, 'in a worse position than the devils'. In the words of St. James, such people 'believe and tremble'.[1] The merely rational believer is, in fact, indifferent to his belief.

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[1] *Introduction to Psychology of Religion*, Ch. VI.

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Sensual To Spiritual

1. *Incentives and Types of Conversion*

THE ARGUMENT OF the last chapter has convinced us that the genuine lasting belief in God is ultimately grounded in the experience of God, and that any other type of belief, whether induced by an appeal to the sense of natural beauty, or to the Kantian 'good will', or created by ratiocination or traditional instruction, has at best some pragmatic value so far as it 'works', that is, so far as it provides us with a social structure as governed and supervised by an omniscient moral being. Now, such a belief, as grounded in intuitive knowledge of God, is given to a very few; innumerable others have only a sort of hazardous belief which has utility, but corresponding to which they are unable to tell whether there exists or not a factual reality. How then is the common run of people to attain to the right belief in God?

It is often said that you must have faith in order to know God. Faith is just another name for belief. Hence, to say that the experience of God is due to an act of faith and that real faith or belief is due to an experience of God, is to argue in a circle. Truly, a man cannot enter into water unless he is able to swim, and swimming is impossible without entering into water. And yet, it is truer to say that if a man really wants to swim, he must overcome the theoretical difficulty of the argument by actually entering into the water. Similarly, one who wants to know God must begin somewhere by an initial act of faith. It does not matter even if the initial step is due to blind credulity. One has to accept it tentatively or provisionally, just as a student of science accepts a hypothesis for the sake of proving or disproving it.

This provisional, initial act of faith is the bridge that connects the sensual with the spiritual life; it is the point of new departure in life, and constitutes the essence of religious conversion. The various ways in which the faith arises and the conversion takes place, the nature of the new life as preceded by the Dark Night of the soul, and the meaning of the spiritual threshold as indicated by the meeting of the Guru, will be the topics of our present discussion.

Why at all, let us first see, is the spiritual life sought? What are the motives which induce one to seek it? The hope of a heaven or a paradise with all the beautiful and precious things in it after death is a motive not of spiritual life, but of an extension of sensual life, more exalted and richer than the one we are now enjoying. The spiritual life means for us the life as lived by the Spirit or God, and the question for us is why it is that one turns one's back on the life of the senses and entertains a desire to know God. In a general way, it can be said that the sensual life is found deficient and unsatisfactory for a thoughtful man, and so there is an instinctive yearning of the heart for a peaceful and happy life. To come to details, we shall find that there are various causes of this thirst for Divine life, various incidents and occasions due to one or other of which, man is thrown somehow by chance out of the vortex of sensuality into the penumbra of spiritual life, and then according to his efforts is drawn more and more to the centre of it namely, the immediate and the intuitive realization of God.

1. To begin with the more direct and effective causes on the emotional side, the reaction against the hectic indulgence in pleasures of the body seems to be most prominent. There is a limit to the capacity of man to enjoy the bodily pleasures. The body and the senses become weak and exhausted; and though the desires increase in number and intensity, it becomes physically impossible to derive the satisfaction by fulfilling them. The more the indulgence, the sooner the reaction. When the body would become impotent to yield the necessary pleasures, there might arise disgust and contempt for it; and that the vacant

mind would either take to intellectual or spiritual pursuits.

2. Actual suffering from bodily pain due to old age or disease; loss of friends and relatives and of persons who are most dear; calamities and perplexities of all sorts, and the consciousness of being utterly helpless to avert these, are again, emotionally strong incentives for seeking the spiritual life.

3. Consciousness of having committed sins and the consequent repentance bring about, many a time, a sudden revolt against the past and an intense desire for a new way of living. Simultaneously, the repentant soul comes to believe in a redeemer who will wipe away the sins and guide him on to a new haven of peace, love and confidence.

4. Disappointments of various kinds in love, position, rank, honour and wealth in life, experience of deliberate wickedness and ingratitude of the world, desertion by friends and relatives without any cause, and the awareness of corresponding inequality when the weak, the effeminate and the unworthy are crowned with success in every way, are some of the causes which make a man fatalistic and pessimistic, in spite of himself. He comes to believe in a Fate or Power which is beyond himself. It is not the lucky successful few, deserving or undeserving, but the many unsuccessful and miserable, though deserving, that have a right to be heard. If we consider also how persecution and misery are heaped upon the good and the righteous such as Jñāneśvara, Tukārāma, Socrates, and Jesus, the injustice of the world will appear as a riddle only to be solved by a faith in another spiritual world which will set the balance right. The evil and injustice become, as it were, the price given in advance of the spiritual harvest to come. The cry of despair and disappointment, though uttered in the wilderness, so far as the profits of this world are concerned, sometimes, rouses the faith in the spiritual life, and so, is not without any purpose.

5. Wounded pride and subdued vanity and arrogance may again be the turning points in a man's life. This is how Rāmeśvara Bhaṭṭa became a disciple of Tukārāma, and Vāmanapaṇḍita was led to value the spiritual life. In such cases there is a peculiar combination of will and emotion ; so that, when the will is frustrated the emotion too evaporates; and the soul becomes a passive receptacle of the new onrush of ideas, emotions or presentations that bring about the rupture. Tulsidāsa, who

was excessively attached to his wife, is reported to have climbed up to her room by means of a snake which he mistook for a rope. But the admonitions, which he received from his wife, turned him into a devotee of God. Nāmadeva was moved by the sight of the misery of a widow whose husband he had killed. The emotion of mercy swept away his habit of waylaying travellers and placed in his heart a new object, *viz.*, God. St. Paul left off persecuting the Christians and began to spread the gospel of Christ, because his zeal for persecution was put an end to by the vision he saw on his road to Damascus. Hatred gave place to love, and persecution to protection. In all such cases, the zeal, the enthusiasm, and the will-power remain constant, though the emotion and the object of emotion change.

6. On the intellectual side, too, conversion is possible in the following way. For a thoughtful person, it is not quite necessary that he himself should undergo the emotional crisis, or be reduced to a plight of misery in order to react against it. It is enough if he has a real and sympathetic understanding of the nature of misery, injustice and evil. A thoughtful and sensitive person can do far more by his sweep of imagination and thought than a person with no imagination and little thought. The actual misery of the world is, as it were, visualized by him by his strong imaginative faculty; nay, being sensitive to the core, he lives and experiences it, as it were, though he may himself be rolling in riches. '*Sarvam Duḥkham Vivekinaḥ*', says Buddha. The thought about the misery of others is itself as good as actual misery for a thoughtful person. That is why the sight of a corpse was to Goutama an epitome of all the misery and short-lived illusions of the world. The idea of the illusory and transitory nature of the world was so clear to Spinoza that he thought that God alone would be the object which would at once satisfy the intellect, the will and the heart. When Rāmadāsa, the prince of rationalistic mystics, says that that person alone is fit for spiritual life who has been afflicted in all possible ways, what he means is, not that one must necessarily undergo all such afflictions, but that he must be pained by the idea of them, before he can hope to cross the threshold of life spiritual. The same moral is pointed out by the saying of Śankara that one should become a Sannyāsin the very day on which one becomes tired of the world. In short, a strong, irresistible,

intellectual sympathy is as potent an urge for spiritual life as an emotional crisis or a physical pain, though it is true that actual suffering to a certain extent will sharpen that urge.

7. A chance but fortunate contact with the good and the holy is sometimes the cause of an altogether a new turn in life; and, if the personality be a powerful one, the liking created for the new way of living is very often permanent. The liking grows into faith, on account of the simple acts of goodness and piety done in imitation of the Master; and then it happens that the Master himself gradually puts the aspiring soul on the path of God.

8. A traditional mode of worship and of purification is yet another way which will ultimately lead one to apprehend the real way of knowing God. Let a man worship the image of God as his ancestors used to do, and let him bathe in the holy waters for self-purification and do other sorts of penances; the faith that keeps him devout in doing Saguṇa-Bhakti (worship of God as personal), may, in course of time, enable him also to appraise Nirguṇa-Bhakti (worship of the impersonal aspect of God), which constitutes the essence of spiritual life. Let the devotion be Sakāma, done for the sake of some material end; one day, it will all of a sudden ripen into Nishkāma the end of which is the realization of God. Let the devotion be of an afflicted person, with the motive of getting over the afflictions and the miseries; there is the probability that, the miseries over, the devotion will be directed for the purpose of God-realization also. Let it again be of a person endowed with a rationalistic faith that inquires into the meaning and nature of divine life; it too will take the shape of a devotion characterised by intuition, meditation and surrender. For, it is only by degrees and in course of time, that a man will realize the limitation of intellect and the futility of mere image-worship and godless penances; will come to possess less and less of desires; will learn to lessen his sorrows by the aid of God, and develop indifference to physical sufferings and finally know God. In short, let a man begin to seek the spiritual life on account of some reason or other, even by doubting, hating or persecuting God and His followers; he is bound to come to the gates of spiritual life, provided his efforts are genuine.

So far, we have discussed the reasons which are responsible for bringing about a change mainly in the attitude of persons who are deeply merged in the life of the senses. A change in the attitude towards life is necessary before it works out another change in the current of the life itself. There are thus two conversions before the spiritual life can be said to begin at all; the initial conversion which merely turns the face of the man from one sort of life to another, a mere change in the attitude; and the other, the real conversion which brings about a change in the man himself, and not simply in his attitude. The first is a change in the prospect lying ahead, in the view of the universe, in the mental equipment and the intellectual outlook; the second is the change in the actual mode of living and acting, in the moral and the spiritual being of man. We have only done with the causes that lead to the first change, the nature of which we will do well to describe briefly.

The transition from the state of Baddha (bound) to that of a Mumukṣu (desiring liberation) constitutes the first conversion in the attitude or the view of life. A Baddha is he who has no knowledge of the Ātman, nor even a regard for it, or for those who have it. On the contrary, he has a definite disregard for the good and the holy, and takes a joy in speaking ill of them. Himself being sinful and voluptuous, and the storehouse of all that is ugly and wicked, in thought, speech and action, he cannot bear to have even a look at the devotees of God. He censures them, wards off others from following them, and is so much engrossed in the sensual pleasures that wealth and women are to him the highest prizes to be won in this life. Wealth and women become the sole objects of his contemplation, for the acquisition of which he spends every minute of his life, and with the concentrated force of the energies of his senses and body. He becomes so intoxicated by the fury of the passions that he becomes blind to the accumulating sins, and even to the facts that his body would be weak in old age and that he would die. In a word, he does not pass beyond the consideration of his body, and beyond the sensual and the hedonistic scale of values.

In course of time, however, a reaction may take place in one or other of the many ways which we have considered above. There comes about a total revolution in the mental and intellectual make-up of the Baddha, and there emerges a new man (so far as the attitude to life is concerned) whom we shall now call

Mumukṣu. He is filled with horror at the recollection of the dark and nightmarish past, and almost despairs at the prospect of the gloomy and the uncertain future. He becomes ashamed of his hydra-headed egoism and his worldly greatness and reputation, which made him disbelieve in God and the saints. Reversing his steps, he comes to regard that which he had disregarded, owns his folly in not recognizing the evanescent nature of the worldly life, and remorsefully condemns himself, as sinful, fallen, thoughtless and mean. Being scorched by the fire of repentance and self-condemnation, he feels a thirst for spiritual life and wishes to wait upon the good and the holy in order to have spiritual guidance.

2. *Optimism and Pessimism*

Before we proceed to the consideration of the other conversion which we call as the spiritual or metaphysical conversion, as distinguished from the one which we have just noticed, namely, the mental or moral conversion, we shall deal with two topics which appear interesting but distorted in the psychology of mysticism as dealt with by Western scholars. One is the problem of pessimism as opposed to optimism, and the other is that of the classification of conversion into types.

It is a constant practice of many Christian writers to dub Indian thought, as a whole, as pessimistic in outlook; thereby indicating that the Indian soul is very often sick and unhealthy. Space does not allow us fully to vindicate the honour of Indian thought as being perfectly healthy and free from sickness of any kind. It will be enough for our present purpose to point out the meaning and function of pessimism in the psychology of Indian mysticism and leave the prejudiced writers to take whatever moral they like.

If, by pessimism, we mean cowardice, weakness, or a pusillanimous nature, pessimism then is a defect which must be ruthlessly eradicated. If, on the contrary, by pessimism we mean a correct philosophic appreciation of the fact of Evil and its supreme and inexorable hold on human destiny, and also if, by way of implication, we postulate the need of courage to face it and to overcome it, pessimism then is certainly a virtue which must be cultivated as a necessary prologue to any spiritual progress. Indian thought, though apparently pessimistic in outlook, is really robust and healthy. Hardly can a coward think of death as an impending calamity which is not to be dreaded but faced; hardly can he think of the joys and pleasures of life, the riches of kings and the most beautiful things of this world as things of nought, even though he has the capacity and ability to possess and enjoy them. It requires great courage, imagination and faith in something nobler in order to face the dark aspect of life. Even a child can look with complacence on the sunny side of life. It requires neither courage nor imagination nor thought to say with the "happy-go-lucky" that they are "sanguine and healthy-minded." At best it is a statement of personal favourable circumstances, and not a philosophical opinion of what they actually are. When they refuse to take note of the dark side of life and are so circumstanced as to live habitually on the "sunny side of their misery line", as William James puts it, "how is it possible that they would ever rise to the height of philosophic speculation and sound forth their opinions after a careful calculation of the two sides?' To quote William James, 'When such a conquering optimist as Goethe can express himself in this wise, what must it be with less successful men? 'I will say nothing against the course of my existence. But at bottom it has been nothing but pain and burden and I can affirm that during the whole of my 75 years, I have not had four weeks of genuine well-being.'[1] Luther, again, one of the most successful men in the world, would readily eat up his necklace on account of absolute failure, as he declared his life to be. Tukārāma declares that in life happiness amounts to a barley seed, misery to a mountain. 'Who is all-round happy in this world ?' asks Rāmadāsa. Death accompanies the child even in its embryonic condition, says Jñāneśvara. Utterances like these are not at all indications of weakness, but of the recognition of the fact of Evil which must be heroically faced and lived.

The argument will gain in clearness, if we speak of optimism and pessimism, each on two levels. Pessimism on the lower level is a sign of weakness, and as such must be avoided. Optimism on the lower level is the superficial contentment with one's 'brief chance at natural good'. One must not be too proud of this ; for one does not know when the "bell of life will have a crack.' Now, pessimism on the higher level—and Indian thought has the stamp of this higher pessimism—is always the index of extraordinary courage and imagination in visualizing the dark aspect of life. It implies the frank recognition of the fact that the chain of life is no stronger than its weakest link, and that life must be faced in all its stern and sad realities. The burden of life is accepted not grudgingly but heroically, and as the man gains in strength on account of the moral fervour and spiritual progress, there emerges the new optimism known to a mystic alone. The joy now felt is no longer the joy of 'forgetful superficiality' of the so-called healthy-minded, or rather the healthy-bodied persons of the market or the forum. It is a joy of victory over the Evil and Fate. It is impossible for any to have this joy for whom there is no battle to be fought. The so-called optimists of the world are to be doubly pitied. In the first place, there is no problem for them to solve, or having one they ignore or forget it. In the second place, they are arrogant inasmuch as they dub those who have thought and imagination as pessimists. They do not understand that it is only on the background of the darkness of pessimism and asceticism that the moral and spiritual victory will shine forth with the richest hues of Divine joy and optimism.

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[1] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Ch. VI & VII.

3. *Conversion and Adolescence*

Another problem which deserves our attention before we pass on to spiritual conversion is the classification of conversion into types. William James and Starbuck classify cases of conversions according to two types: the volitional type and the type by self-surrender. 'In the volitional type', says James, 'the regenerative change is usually gradual and consists in the building up, piece by piece, of the new set of moral and spiritual habits.' Self-surrender too seems indispensable according to Dr. Starbuck. 'He must relax' says Dr. Starbuck, 'that is, he must fall back upon a larger Power that makes for righteousness.'[1] On a different basis, A. C. Underwood speaks of three types of conversion : the intellectual, the emotional and the moral. Conversion may also be sudden or gradual. In view of the various reasons due to which conversion takes place, we shall immediately find that there is one element of truth in all the varieties referred to by the psychologists. For a thoughtful man, conversion is bound to be volitional, gradual and intellectual. If a particular course of action is to be followed by him, it must first make an appeal to his intellect and then persuade the will. In the case of a person in whom there is a sudden rise and fall of emotions, conversion too will be sudden and very often of the type by self-surrender. It is the emotion which, being sudden, is strong to overpower its victim and make him surrender. The moral conversion, on the other hand, is either sudden or gradual, as also, voluntary or otherwise. It depends upon the character of the revolt against the immoral life in the past.

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[1] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Ch. X.

The view advocated by Dr. Starbuck that conversion is 'a distinctively adolescent phenomenon' is however too facile a generalization to stand the test of empirical observation. We may grant that there is a 'close connection between the ripening of the mental and physical powers at adolescence and religious awakening;' but this does not establish any causal connection between the two. The religious awakening may come at any period in a man's life, because the motives which cause such awakening are so widely different from each other, that it can hardly be said that they all crop up at adolescence only. How we wish that the religious awakening should occur at adolescence or even earlier, so that the religious activities will be pursued for a longer time and with greater energy!

The phenomenon of counter-conversion or of 'lapse,' though not of importance from the psychological point of view, is nevertheless admitted by James as a fact. We have to suggest that so far as the conversion in attitude towards life is concerned, there is the possibility of a revision of view, and of a lapse, if the belief that is born is not powerful to induce action. There can, however, be no counter-conversion in the case of spiritual conversion which we shall presently discuss.

4. *Function of the Guru in Conversion*

Just as a stream, once it has become one with the river, cannot be separated; or just as iron cannot become iron when once it becomes gold at the touch of Parisa (Philosopher's stone), even so, an aspirant, once he is baptised into spiritual knowledge can never cease to be a spiritual unit. There may be lapses of conduct and indulgence into the old ways of living, and yet the spiritual link which has bound him to God can never be broken. He can never be non-spiritual in essence, though in practice and in theory he may do and speak in a manner unworthy of a spiritual being. That will constitute only a hindrance in the way of his spiritual progress, but will never turn out the seed of that immortal life which is sown deep in him. The spiritual conversion brings about the identity, in germ and in essence, of the Jīva and the Śiva, of self and God, and the whole spiritual life consists in the recognition and realization of this identity.

A peculiar feature of the spiritual conversion, as we have already seen while discussing the dogmas of spiritual life, is that it requires another person to bring it about. It is well-nigh impossible that one should find the real path of God for himself without another person who has already realized God. The mental or the moral conversion may take place in an individual without any direct intervention of anybody else. No doubt, for spiritual progress, the intellectual, the mental, the moral and the devotional elements are all necssary; but the bond of identity between man and God, which already exists for the purposes of theoretical metaphysics and from Absolutist's point of view, must, for the purpose of practical spiritual life be forged from outside. The spiritual life is fundamentally and primarily a life of being and then of knowing ; accordingly, man is first to become God or to approximate to Him and then (in the very moment of becoming) know that he is being identified with God. Naturally, that which he is to become, he must have in him, to begin with, in the form of seed or germ ; and the seed must be of such a concrete nature as will be amenable to growth. It is the concrete seed of the Idea or the name of God, and not the abstract concept or class-name which does not grow. The scheme of abstract concepts will lead a man to formulate an arid metaphysics which he and others will intellectually understand. They will have merely an intellectual understanding of what is meant by God, but will never be able to become God or God-like.

The secret of knowing God, of realizing Him is, whether we like it or not, in the hands of the Mystic. He must sow the seed of God in us if we wish to grow ourselves into the Divine tree; he must grant us the spark which will gradually be kindled into a huge spiritual fire. He must give us the Word or the Logos, the symbol of God, which will enable us to reach God. It is through him alone as spiritual teacher or Guru that we shall have to bring about the spiritual conversion in us. We shall first firmly establish in our mind the spiritual instruction or the Name of God, and then, in the fullness of time, be and know God simultaneously.

Another feature of the spiritual conversion is that it is not necessary that it should be preceded by the conversion in attitude; nor can it be said that spiritual conversion will follow as a necessary consequence of the moral one. God makes his own choice; and so does the spiritual teacher or Guru. For reasons which he alone may know best his grace may fall upon a sinful man; and it may take a longer time for a morally good person to have it. This does not mean that we should behave indifferently; it only means that there are no limitations on the power of God. The moment he is accepted as a man of God, 'his sins will be washed away by the power of the Name of God.' No separate and prior washing of sins is needed by way of repentance and moral conversion. And yet, from the human point of view, it remains true that repentance and self-condemnation are valuable moral assets which make one expect the grace of God. Such a man will be doubly firm, firm by his own moral worth, and firm by the grace of God.

We shall close this chapter with a brief description of the function of the Guru in the spiritual life. So far as his salient characteristics are concerned, we shall deal with them in the chapter on the Ideal saint. The greatest function of the spiritual teacher is that it is he who alone can point out to the devotee the way of realizing God. Just as the mother feeds the baby directly on her milk, even so the Guru feeds the ears of the disciple with the spiritual instruction, and in that very moment, brings him in contact with God, and breaks off the fetters of bondage. The spiritual nourishment of the disciple being the only thing in his heart, the Guru leads the disciple Sādhana-ward, and holding him, as if by the hand, helps him to cross the ocean of Saṁsāra through obstacles and difficulties. He does not fondle the disciple and allow him to indulge in the sensual desires beyond a limit which he thinks fit; nor does he flatter him for any favours, even though the disciple is capable of giving away as a prize the kingdom of the whole earth. He only expects one thing from his disciples, and that is the service of God.

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From Idol-worship to God-realization

Now that we have been able to draw an outline of the general course in which a man is likely to move from the sensual to the spiritual way of life, let us also see in a general way how he is capable of moving from his habit of worshipping the idols to that of getting himself absorbed in meditating on the Name of God and of contemplating on the Forms of God. This we shall be able to do in a better way by remembering what we have already done in our foregoing chapter on 'Religious Belief' regarding our explanation of the distinction between the two forms of Anthropomorphism, namely, the Imaginative and the Representative types of it. While the former is absolutely useless as Xenophanes had declared it long ago, the latter has been most fruitful so far at least as the Hindus believe it. Let us therefore first reproduce here what we have sometime written in an article elsewhere[1] regarding the justification of idol-worship, and then proceed to deal with the limitations of it and with the succeeding changes and development of it till we arrive at the concrete realization of God by the yoga advocated by the saints.

1. *Justification and limitations of Idol-worship*

The Hindus worship the idols; and it is the Hindus who more than any one else have denounced it as severely as it is possible. It is no wonder if, among the various systems of philosophy and religious faiths which have been current in India during the past several centuries, there might be certain systems and faiths which are vehemently against idol-worship either because they nourish a fanatic belief that one's own faith is correct or because they are intolerant to those of others. But prejudice and fanaticism apart, even the development of the Hindu thought as a whole from polytheism to henotheism and from henotheism to monism is due to the critical attitude of philosophers and the insight of the seers. With all this, what however, we find today is not simply the prevalence of monistic belief, but that of the polytheistic and the henotheistic beliefs also. And the mystery of the situation is that even the learned and the wisest among the Hindus believe in theory that there is only one God, but in practice, worship several gods, and allow it to be done by others. This is not a concession to ignorance, but a legitimate though optional privilege of all. What was current in the Vedic times is current even today. Indra then assumed various forms, and as such was endowed with various powers. Agni was described as having three feet, two heads and seven hands. Puruṣa as having a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet and so on. The functions of one deity were usurped by another. Today, also, we have various names, forms, functions and powers of the deities such as Gaṇeśa, Lakṣmi, Kāli, Viṣṇu and so on. And among the votaries of these deities, there are not only ignorant people who have no other aim but to satisfy their petty, selfish desires, but also philosophers, saints and mystics of great reputation. Even the great monistic philosopher-saint Śrī Śankarācārya, not to speak about the dualistic and theistic Ācāryas, has composed very beautiful poetry in praise of several deities. And, so also, in modern and recent times, we can name a number of great Hindu saints who have themselves praised and worshipped several incarnations of God including Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. So, in view of this general picture of the reverential attitude of the Hindus, as has been expressed since the Vedic times down to our own days, what shall be our considered opinion regarding the value of the worship of the idols and images which are fashioned after the various conceptions about the forms and powers of gods and goddesses? Shall we say that the polytheistic belief and worship are the heritage of the blind credulity of the past, a relic of the ignorant and dumb homage to the personified natural phenomena; or an amorphous mixture of anthropomorphic notions, animistic fear, imaginative art and a belief in magic and spell? An atheist requires no capital to declare that God does not exist. Even so, one who has only a minimum of intelligence can with great force say that it is nothing but the blasphemy against the one real God. As a matter of fact a thorough-going examination of the whole of the problem may require a volume. We shall have therefore to remain content by saying in this small article as to what we hold in the matter and why.

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[1] "Paramparāgata yoga" by Gangādāsa Vyāsa, pp. 35-39, Dec. 1971.

"Idol-worship, as a form of Polytheism, must definitely have some relation with what we mean by theism. Being different both from Deism and Pantheism, theism requires God to be both transcendent and immanent, and not simply transcendent or immanent only. For, as transcendent, He becomes the object of fear and worship, and as immanent, the object of love and repose. In other words, corresponding to the various emotions which the human heart is capable of feeling such as, fear, awe, reverence, dependence, love etc., God of theistic belief is also considered as possessing various attributes which are said to be the cause of these emotions. That is why God is said to be at once fearful and endowed with mercy, or as being full of wrath and love. Equally so, are the idols or images to the idol-worshippers.

"If we raise however the fundamental question as to what must be the basis of the belief that God has such and such attributes, we shall have to straightway admit that it is either an unreasoned, traditional dogma due to anthropomorphic imagination or a direct and immediate experience of them by some one in the past, but which in course of time, and in the absence of renewed experience, takes the forms of verbal and pictorial imagery. Thus, theism as a whole is either a hollow structure raised on the heightening of the human qualities, a mere form without matter, or an everlasting source of joy and peace on account of its being founded on the bedrock of mystical experience which, as Prof. R. D. Ranade holds, is the direct first hand contact with the Reality or God. Understood in the latter sense, theism is the bulwark of mysticism. In other words, Theistic philosophy is correct to the extent to which it describes accurately the objective, the universal and the necessary validity of the mystical experience. Otherwise, it will always have the risk of being thrown over-board as sheer imagination and moonshine.

"Applying this logic to polytheism and to the worship of the idols, we may at once say that what holds true of theism as a whole holds true of the varieties of theism also. If one trustworthy person believes that God is loving or wrathful on account of his own experience, others who follow him begin to say the same thing about God, even though they have no such experience. The belief due to insight stands as a guarantee for the belief due to faith. St. Paul made an appeal to the faith of the people saying, "Follow me as I followed the Christ", but gave them the assurance that his own faith was due to the fact that Christ lived in him. Faith begets faith. The faith of St. Paul was due to his experience of the presence of the Christ in him, the faith of the people however which he sought was a venture, since it was to be based only on the veracity of St. Paul. But it is this latter faith which, though it might appear as blind credulity, would enable one to possess the former also as and when he begins to have spiritual experience. If faith due to experience can be termed as the 'way down', the faith which leads to experience can be termed as the 'way up'. The important point to note in this double process is that the gulf between the ignorance of the ordinary men and the experience of God-realization of a saint is bridged by faith in the trustworthiness of the saint himself. It is the saint who alone has got the power to act as an intermediary between men who are soaked in ignorance and the omnipresent and omniscient God, and who shows them the path of God. It is the saints who first get the visions of God as a swan, or as a serpent, a winged horse, an old camel, a bull, a crescent or a full moon, a rising sun, a child, a half-man and a half-lion, an elephant, a male or a female form of human being with one and more hands, heads, eyes, and so on. All these visions are immaculate and made up of light and of different attractive colours, forms, shapes and sizes. Contemplating on them, the saints derive a joy and a peace which are unique and imperishable. They become so much overwhelmed by the beauty, splendour, majesty and sublimity of these visions, that they are tempted to try to conserve them in some forms, however crude and unbecoming they may be, such as that can be had by way of painting or sculpture.

"To illustrate this point, innumerable instances can be cited regarding how even some of the greatest of the saints have either themselves installed the images of gods or encouraged the worship of those which were already existing. Rāmadāsa, the great saint of Maharashtra is reputed to have installed images of the deity known as Hanumān (having the form of a monkey) in as many as eleven towns and villages and of Śrī Rāma in two places, namely, Chāphal and Sajjanagaḍa. A host of other saints including the great among them, namely, Jñāneśvara, Nāmadeva and Tukārāma, had made the stone-image of Viṭṭhala at Paṇḍharpur the centre of all their spiritual activities; and this is being continued without any break during the past seven hundred years. Even so, the deities of Dattātraya and of Gaṇesa (that of a man with the head of an elephant) and of the goddesses known as Mahākāli, Mahālakṣmi and Mahāsaraswati etc; with varying number of hands and weapons in them, are being adored since the time of the epics not only by the illiterate masses but also by the intelligentsia and the spiritually great all over India. In short, inasmuch as even the great saints and mystics of the land have whole-heartedly recommended the belief and worship of these various images of God, it will be impossible for an honest student of history and philosophy to dismiss them as due to superstition and ignorance. What we think about the problem is that the belief in idol-worship is only a reminder to us that the various deities have the representative value of the various visions which the mystics of India have been having during the last several centuries. Even in the times of the Vedas and the Epics, it must be remembered that the visions of the several deities were described in such a manner as would smack of anthropomorphism. But all this, as we have already said, is not anthropomorphism but 'mystico-morphism'. The genesis of Idol-worship is to be found in the direct and immediate visions of God. It is the latter which ought to be the aim of spiritual life, though the former might serve only as a beginning or a propaedeutic to the realization of God."

Idol-worship becomes all the more valuable and fruitful if the idol and the temple in which it is installed are not set up to perpetuate and fulfil the greed of selfish priest-craft, but to create for man the possibility of realizing God. This will be achieved truly by the saints who have realized God, and not simply by any of the richest men in the world. An image of God which is most beautifully carved out of a metal or stone by even the best architect will be but a poor imitation of an image which appears rough and uninviting, but which, like the images of the Lord, Śrī Rāma, are set up by a realized saint like Rāmadāsa, in Chāphal and Sajjanagaḍa, for instance. The worship of the latter kind of images has the sanction of the saints, but this may or may not be available in the case of the worship of the former. This means that even the idol-worship will be far more beneficial if it carries with it the approval and the grace of a God-realized saint, or if the temple, like that of Viṭṭhala in Paṇḍharpur is frequented by a vast number of saints and throughout a very long time. Both the image and the temple therefore first become themselves purified by the contact of the saints, and then they become able to confer blessings and purification on the innumerable other devotees. Thus the images of God too become as if a store-house of the grace borrowed from the God-realized saints, and then become useful to the mankind as intermediary distributors of that grace. Certainly, therefore, we have to say that temple-going and image-worship will be of immense use in inducing a man to become more and more spiritual in nature, and to inculcate in him a habit and a discipline which will go to create an attitude of surrender, love, reverence, fear and worship. In the company of other devotees, he would soon begin to take delight in performing the various rituals which form a part of the worship, and learn how to pray and to praise the deity.

All this is very valuable indeed. But how long this mode of worship should continue would be a serious question for a student of philosophy of religion as well as for one who wishes to see the unbreakable and self-effulgent God face to face. How can one visit the temple and go through all the rituals when he becomes too weak to do so owing to illness or old age? His faith may dwindle, if he finds that his offerings of precious things to God and his prayers and praises become unfruitful. Perhaps, he might be advised not to go on pilgrimages any more, nor to visit the temples, but to set up a painting or a photograph or a model of a deity he was worshipping till then in his own house and be content by being devoted to it. This too is not wrong, provided the interest and the faith remain the same. But, instead of this, what happens many a time is that newer and newer substitutes are resorted to especially when the faith is dwindling in the earlier deities or when it becomes more convenient to pay a visit to the temples of the new deities which are situated nearby. Perhaps, the cruel hand of an iconoclast may make the change necessary; or perhaps, the wrong notion that another deity or another faith may fulfil one's desires is responsible for the grocer-like change in attitude or for the utilitarian conversion of faith. Whatever may be the reason, the image-worship, unless it is specifically recommended by a saint, is in danger of being given up in despair and distrust, or kept on as a mere hollow, traditional or hereditary mode of ritualism, without any warmth of devotion in it. When polytheism would come to such a pass, there would hardly be any scope left for its development into henotheism or monotheism, and much less in the pantheistic and the mystical approach to God-realization. There will then be a religion without much of devotion and without the presence of God either in the so-called holy places or in the hearts of men, though it will not be just another name for agnosticism or scepticism.

In short, with all the possible defects which might crop up while adhering to the ritualistic forms of the sacrificial cult as part of the polytheistic worship, it must be remembered that polytheism has been current down from the Vedic times and that it will remain so as a very powerful instrument of moulding the ethico-spiritual behaviour of man in the right direction. For, under the guidance of those who have realized God, the polytheistic belief and worship will only represent, though unconsciously in the beginning, the belief and worship of the various manifestations of God. It is because of this eternal truth behind the polytheistic worship that the Hindu saints have been consistent in recommending the worship of the pictures and photographs of only such deities and God-realized persons whom they have themselves visualized as immaculate visions of God-head.

2. Transition to Mānasa-Pūjā

For this very reason, the Hindu saints do not fight shy of recommending to others even the use of memory and imagination in trying to visualise before their mind's eye, the form of a particular deity which was first seen, and then to worship it mentally with all the pomp and glory which can be mentally created. In order to give a bath to the deity, water can be mentally brought from the holy rivers, Gangā and Yamunā; fresh flowers and fruits, and perfumes and finest possible dress and rich dishes and so on can be there instantaneously as offerings to the visualized deity. One can then sing praises and prayers to it and implore to grant him both material prosperity and spiritual illumination. The saint Ekanātha, following the Bhāgavata Purāṇa gives very valuable help as to how one should concentrate one's mind and imagine that he is first seeing mentally before him the delicate and the beautiful feet of the image of a particular deity, and when they are clearly visualized, concentrate and imagine that he is seeing in succession the legs, the abdomen, the chest and the face of the image. By daily practice the full image can be visualized in a standing posture as if waiting with a smiling face to grace the devotee. This kind of mental worship (Mānasa-pūjā) of an imagined God, so to say, after one has created the image of God according to one's own choice will enable one to have his desires fulfilled, and even to possess some supernatural powers. One thing is certain, namely, that the devotee becomes soon lost in the joy of the contemplation on the vision which becomes more and more vividly clear as the worshipper's devotion, surrender and contemplation increase in duration and intensity of love and faith. The visualized image of God thus becomes a reality for him, a guide and friend to counsel and protect him in times of difficulties and dangers, and one who would lead him on to higher and higher truths and experience in the spiritual field. In fact, the image that appears to have been formed by the combined, repeated and concentrated efforts of memory, imagination, faith, surrender and hope, is nothing but the crystallised reappearance in a disembodied form of what was once for the devotee a gross and a physical object of worship formed out of clay, stone or metal.

Thus it is that the polytheistic instinct of worshipping a tangible object as the symbol of God-head, which is being nourished and fostered under the able guidance of great saints among the Hindus, is transformed into a subtle, immaculate and yet a mentally perceivable and a durable divine object which is sometimes a prototype of the earlier object or is altogether a fresh emergent. Obviously then, the devotee pays more and more attention, love and homage to what he sees by the mind, though he does not turn his back against the physical idols out of disrespect. For, he knows that what transcended him and was perceivable in a particular place outside him by the physical eyes only has now become for him an internally immanent and a non-sensuous object. Now he can perceive it at any time, and for which he need not visit the place in which the idol is situated. This is indeed a great advance spiritually considered, though the Hindu may even now remain essentially a believer in many gods; and as such, even the internally perceived form of God might be different from what is perceived by another. Instead of the former differences between the idols of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and other deities, they would now be between the visions of these deities; and the devotees would stick to their visions though they would know that there exist other visions of other devotees also. Gods are many, and the devotees too are many even at the stage of the Mānasa worship. The polytheistic belief is not yet removed.

Besides, there lingers in a veiled form, one may say, the same stigma of anthropomorphism which was likely to be on the level of idol-worship. What was carved out or painted or photographed by the human hand, has now been manufactured by human imagination and memory put together. There is no certain evidence to say that the form of the deity which is visualized by the mind is not wholly a mental creation and that therefore it is not on a par with illusion or hallucination. What the mind perceives is not perceived by the physical eye. There is therefore no sure test of objective validity, of necessity, or of universality so far as this mental experience goes. As the saint, Rāmadāsa, points out, both the Guru and the disciple are likely to go wrong in this affair of the Mānasa Pūjā (mental worship). The disciple might visualize after great mental efforts a god with a crown on his head, but find that the garland of flowers that he has mentally produced has become too short to be thrown over the head and the crown. The Guru solves the difficulty by advising the disciple to remove the crown and then to put the garland round the neck of the deity. Rāmadāsa remarks that the Guru also must have been too dull. He could have advised the disciple to lengthen the garland by putting more flowers on it and then to throw it beyond the crown. Indeed, who can help if, in the struggle to visualize the form of an idol, some or other limb of it becomes disproportionately short or long, or if, as they say, 'while constructing the form of the image of Gaṅeśa, one succeeds in creating a monkey only.' Who can help if imagination goes a wrong way and distorts the image and spoils the worshipper's mood and attitude. This is neither necessity, nor objectivity; much less universality. Instead of there being any improvement, the creed of idol-worship falls miserably in the ditch of subjectivism and solipsism. One might even call this as self-deception.

3. *Visions as substitutes for Idols*

What is the remedy? It lies, as Rāmadāsa says, in carrying on the spiritual business by recognizing the present and the cash value of it instead of the credit or the future value of it. No doubt, what is subjective today may become objective tomorrow. But there being no guarantee for this, Rāmadāsa advises us to value that experience only which in spite of its being subjective is, at the same time and from the very beginning, objective also. Empirically, at least, the idols made of clay or stone are objectively real, though they can be broken and destroyed; but they do not enter into the contexture of the mind. On the other hand, the so-called mentally visualized forms of gods are comparatively more lasting and incapable of being destroyed by any outside agency. But, open the eyes, and they are lost both to the mind and the eye. What is necessary from the spiritual point of view is that irrespective of the eyes being shut or open, the vision of God must be unalterably the same, as observed by the saint Janābāi, the maid-servant of Nāmadeva. Then alone there will be spiritual experiences which will both be subjective in the sense of being personal, and objective in the sense of being essentially the same to more than one person except in the minor details of shape and size. Then alone will they be free from being illusory on the one hand, and from being physical and sensuous, on the other, though the pluralistic nature of the polytheistic belief is still common to them all. Instead of physical idols and mental images one shall now have spiritual visions which go beyond both mind and matter, but which will be still plural in number, and differ from man to man.

To attain to such immaculate, intuitive, and objectively valid and universal visions of God, one need not at all proceed by the lengthy and the hazardous by-lanes of the sacrificial cults and the random and the blind worship of the inanimate idols and mental imagery. As we have already said, these might be used as only preliminary ways or methods in search of God. They will not take the devotee the whole way even if he resorts to them throughout his life. For one and all, there is always open the royal highway of surrender, meditation, love and prayer by which the saints of all ages and climes have gone till now. One must however receive the sanction of another person who has already travelled considerably on this path to do the same. First of all, he must approach with utmost humility and faith some one who has realized God, and after being initiated by him, must begin in right earnest and with full determination to come in contact face to face with the divine presence in him as well as outside him by the process of meditation on the divine Name and contemplation on the divine visions, sounds etc., i.e., when he becomes endowed by the grace of God. Of this we shall say in details as we proceed in our study. Suffice it to say for the present that a grain of rice or wheat must be sown before one expects to reap rice or wheat. One ought to get therefore the real seed of God from another who has got it, and then sowing it in the fertile soil of his faith and surrender, water it daily by devout meditation and prayer. Then alone the seed will sprout into a plant which, if properly cared and nourished, will in its turn grow into a huge tree and bear several kinds of fruits such as contentment, joy, peace and so on.

4. God-realisation, the common destiny of all saints

All this constitutes what we understand to be the realisation of God in the real sense of the word, and as being objective, universal and personal, notwithstanding the fact that the saints who experience it are removed from each other in various respects such as place, time, language, clime, tradition and custom.

The wonder is what one tongue speaks might appear as jargon to another, though all of them express the same meaning. This is how the Reality of God-realisation persists eternally to manifest itself as one, in spite of the different modes of expressing it in language. Analogously, this is exactly the manner in which the mystic comes to know that Divinity is one in spite of its being presented to his experience as many. Visions, auditions, smells, and all other signs of the presence of God might be many in number; they constitute one Divine Energy and one conscious bliss. Each one of them is capable of filling the human mind and body with this very conscious bliss and power. They are not to be construed as aspects of God but as manifestations or incarnations (Avatāras) of Him, appearing and reappearing in all possible attractive forms of men, birds, animals, inanimate things or even as brilliant and beautiful colours. There is no end to the self-effulgent manifestations of God.

But, now, what shall be our verdict at this stage? Shall we say that all this amounts to polytheism, henotheism or monotheism; or without using theological terminology, shall we say that it is pluralism, monism or monistic pluralism or pluralistic monism? Taking into consideration the nature of Reality which is eternal, infinite, unchangeable, conscious and blissful energy, as well as the process of becoming the Reality which is bound to be limited by space and time, we have to say that it is not any one of these several alternatives. From the experiential, mystical point of view, it is polytheistic monotheism. As we are not simply having an abstract, speculative philosophy, but a concrete, spiritual life corresponding to which we might also have a philosophy which will be a correct intellectual description of that life, we hold that the ultimate view of the Hindu way of leading the spiritual life will be par excellence monotheistic, in spite of its continuing to appear as personal and therefore pluralistic in character. There will be no end to spiritual experiences. Some of them will be constant; some will get themselves hidden, but will reappear; and some will be altogether new. But all these will constitute one Spirit, just as all the ornaments made of gold constitute gold, or just as the waves of the sea constitute water. The ornaments and the waves do present, the appearance of plurality, but they are neither illusions nor are real independently of gold and water.

They may appear to have their own separate individuality, but even then they are, at all times during their apparent separate existence, one Being only. Each and every ornament is gold and nothing but gold. Each and every wave is water and nothing but water of the sea. Even so, each and every vision or audition or any other manifestation of God is nothing else but God.

One may perhaps argue that the different waves are but a part of the sea and not the whole of it, and that, similar is the relation between the ornaments and gold, between the sparks and fire, or between the rays and the Sun. Even so, the various spiritual experiences, though divine in nature, can be argued to be not only portions or aspects of God, but as being also different from God. But we must not mistake analogy for identity, an illustration for what is illustrated. The relation between the visions and God is not, strictly speaking, the relation between the parts and the whole; for the divine, blissful and conscious energy is one and indivisible. Even the physical sciences proclaim this to be true. Sound, light, electricity, radio-activity and nuclear energy are all one in essence, though they differ from each other functionally. Perhaps it might be said that though there is no qualitative difference between a drop of water and a vessel full of it, the former cannot quench the thirst of a man, even so, no vision, nor its counterpart, namely the mental image or the physical idol, which are like drops of water, can satisfy the spiritual thirst of a man, as the worship of one God would be able to do. But even this imaginary doubt holds no water. For, unlike the idols and the mental images, any spiritual vision is so unique that the devotee sees it growing not only in volume or dimensions but also changing altogether into different forms, colours and size. The part changes into a whole and vice versa. What appears as only a limb of the spiritual vision of a human form might reappear as the whole of it or something else. A simple dot, black in colour, might grow into huge concentric circles, touching both the heaven and the earth, and be full of different, brilliant and attractive colours.

This means that the pluralistic and the polytheistic aspects of these visions and auditions and other spiritual experiences as objects of worship and reverence, though true from the point of view of the aspirant, are only apparent in the sense that they are all the manifestations or the modes of the dynamic life of the only one Reality, whom we may indifferently call as God or the Absolute. The infinite divine visions are already present in the God-head; they are only gradually unfolded for the sake of the devotee. In fact, there is no essential difference between one vision and any other vision, or between any one of them and God. As a corollary of this, we can say that there is no essential difference between one saint who has got one vision to his credit and another who is fortunate in seeing some other vision. To be carried away by the belief that there are real distinctions between visions and visions, and between visions and one God, as there are between idols and idols, or between mental images and images, is to be carried away by the wrong belief that polytheism and monotheism must differ fundamentally, and that Hinduism therefore is not monotheistic in character. On the contrary, it is a characteristic of which Hinduism should feel proud, namely, that the mystical type of monotheism in which it has been believing since the Vedic times, and of the truth of which its votaries have been convinced on account of their direct and concrete experience, is not averse to the worship of many gods and goddesses, provided one does not think it to be all in all, but that it leads to the apprehension of the one, real God by the process of surrender, meditation and prayer.

6

Moral and Intellectual Preparation

1. Value of Spiritual Literature

WITH INITIATION THE threshold of spiritual life has been crossed; man has become on probation a denizen of the new world. It is for him now to secure a permanent and respectable position among members of the new life, by a constant cultivation and display of the qualities necessary for that life. What those qualities are, and what training and discipline he must undergo in order to achieve his objective, we shall consider in this and in the next three chapters.

It can never be gainsaid that intellectual apprehension and moral worth are two of the most important qualifications of a Sādhaka, that is of one who is initiated in the way of knowing God. Whether they are equally important before the time of initiation is a matter of great doubt. If initiation, as observed in the last chapter, is ultimately the result of Divine grace, it may then very well happen that a dull and an immoral person may be sanctified and received in the kingdom of God. But once he has been so received by an initial act of grace, the Sādhaka is expected to bid farewell to his foolish and sinful ways of living and to show by thought and actions that he deserved the grace. To continue to lead an immoral life even after initiation is, for all practical purposes, to undo the work of God. Even if the grace of God is competent to do all things, God will certainly expect some efforts on the part of his devotee, before He sends His grace unto him a second time. One act of

Divine grace must be linked to another such act by human efforts, however imperfect they may be. Man must toil in various ways and make himself more and more fit to receive on further occasions the grace from God. Thus, intellectual clarification and moral uprightness constitute the first stage of preparation on the path of God.

In the beginning, it may appear that intellectual preparation is possible only to a few, though the moral one is possible for all. In course of time, however, it will be found that, as a direct result of the spiritual life, intellect too is sharpened, that what was not grasped by the intellect formerly is being grasped, and that intellect combined with faith and experience is capable of keeping a man firm in his spiritual and moral life. On the one hand, intellect and good-will are the means that strengthen the spiritual life; on the other, they are themselves strengthened and turned to good account by spiritual life. So, for all the genuine Sādhakas, intellect and good-will are the two constant companions that make the journey of the Spirit safe and easy. At no time and stage of the journey can they be dispensed with, just as, at no time of our physical existence, can we do away with the utility of our physical eyes.

To begin with the intellectual aids: Śāstra-praciti, that is, the intellectual understanding of what is contained in the scriptures, and the Guru-praciti, that is, the understanding of the truths as known by the Guru, are a preliminary to what is known as Ātma-praciti, that is, Self-experience or Self-realization. Our own experience of a thing is the highest authority we can have about the truth of that thing; and yet, the authority is vitiated to a certain extent by the element of illusions in our experience. To guard against the possibility of our experience as a whole as being only a series of illusions, we are constrained to take into consideration the experiences of the saints and others who are spiritually advanced. As the Naiyāyika allows it, Āptavākya, that is, the experience of one who has attained to God-realisation, comes next to Self-experience in point of authority. And when the various Āptavākyas are collected together, they form what is known as a genuine Śāstra regarding a particular branch of study. Reversing the order, we may say that the best course for a novice is to begin with the Śāstras or the philosophical discussions regarding spiritual matters. He will thereby have the necessary intellectual grounding; but when there arise different opinions, he should fall back upon the second source of authority, namely, the opinions of the experts whom he may be knowing. And yet, what is the use of this knowledge, whether it is derived from books or persons, unless it is tested by actual self-experience? No doubt, it is useful in the way in which theory is useful for practice; but it is the practice of self experience which is most important as an end-in-itself.

The reading of spiritual literature is the greatest incentive even for those who are not spiritually-minded; no wonder, it will be a definite aid to those who are already on the path. Rāmadāsa tells us that a person whose mind is fickle should not leave the reading of his Dāsabodha; much less, by a person who has formed contact with the spiritual life. For it is by constant and daily reading that the meaning which is hidden will gradually manifest itself, and the spiritual life will take deep roots in the soul.

The reading of spiritual literature has a double function. It serves the purposes of philosophy and devotion. Like philosophy, it enables us to discriminate between truth and falsehood, and between the real and the unreal; but unlike philosophy, it enables us to have not merely the construction of the intellect alone, but of intellect and intuition combined. What is first experienced intuitively is put afterwards in the familiar concepts of the intellect. The spiritual literature contains first-hand, direct experience couched in terms of reason, so that, even a student of mere philosophy may in imagination understand, though vaguely, the experience contained in it. To one who is initiated, the spiritual literature comes both as a tonic to the brain and sauce to the heart. If he reads about things of which he has had previously an experience, he is delighted to find that he is on the right path and is convinced about the accuracy of statements which he reads; and if he reads about things of which he has had no experience, he expects no doubt similar accuracy of statement, but regrets that he has no experience corresponding to what he reads. It is this conviction about the accuracy of statement and the ardent longing of the heart to have a corresponding experience that is most valuable from the point of view of spiritual progress. It is not a small gain to be philosophically convinced about the truths of mystical religion, and to possess an insatiable desire to have an actual experience of these truths. The reading of spiritual literature achieves this. It makes a man satisfied and not satisfied at the same time; satisfied so far as he is intellectually and intuitively convinced; and not satisfied so far as there is the intellectual understanding but no actual experience. In the case of a student of mere philosophy, there may not be any dissatisfaction or feeling of want; but in a Sādhaka, the spiritual literature creates the desire to have more and more of experience, and brings home to his mind the sense of weakness, finitude and helplessness. As such, the reading of spiritual literature awakens the Sādhaka to the need of making more efforts, of cultivating the moral virtues and of enhancing his meditation and devotion.

Let us illustrate this by reference to two or three sayings of the saints. When Tukārāma says that a man would very often be ashamed in his heart when he declares openly that another man's wife is to him as good as his own mother, Tukārāma voices forth loudly what passes in the minds of us all. When in Jñāneśvara we read that the Chakora bird will refuse to eat grains of sand when he is so fortunate as to have a feast of moon-beams, or that one who has tasted nectar will refuse to partake of the fluid made of parched rice, we become immediately aware of the world-wide difference between a saint enjoying the spiritual bliss and a man of the world indulging in the pleasures of the senses. When again in Rāmadāsa we read of some sure tests of spiritual life, such as the sense of being without sins, of having put a stop to the round of births and deaths, and of having realized the identity of devotee and God, we feel with utmost humility that with all our spiritual efforts we have achieved nothing. So the reading of spiritual literature does not give us merely soothing doses of theoretical knowledge, but stirs our emotions and makes us fully alive to the currents of devotion in it. It makes us restless and humble, and consequently, more devotional and more dependent on the mercy of God.

The reading of spiritual literature and the discussion of spiritual matters constitute, in a way, Saguṇa-Bhakti, that is, devotion towards the Personal aspect of God. There is no room for discussion or for discourse in Nirguṇa-Bhakti, that is, devotion to the Impersonal aspect of God. So if there is any sort of devotion which allows this, it is Saguṇa. A constant reading of the attributes of God, of the qualities of a saint, of the nature of meditation and its effects and various other kindred topics, brings the mind from the abyss of sensuality to the plane of the Spirit and prepares it to assimilate the spiritual manna given to it by the Guru at the time of initiation. The reading of spiritual literature thus enables the mind to make the transition from the Saguṇa to the Nirguṇa type of devotion by the means of Śravaṇa and Manana, that is, by listening and contemplation. Whether you read a passage or have a discussion over it, or whether you are engaged in meditation on the Word or the Name of God, it is with necessity that Śravaṇa and Manana are involved. To those very few who are able constantly to meditate on the Name of God, or in other words, practise Nirguṇa-Bhakti without the aid of Saguṇa, reading of spiritual literature may not be required often. But to those—and they form the majority—who are fickle-minded and cannot meditate even for a short time on the symbol of God, Saguṇa-Bhakti, as practised by way of reading and discussions of spiritual matters, will be of immense value. In course of time, the mind will bid farewell to idleness, ignorance and unbelief. There will arise the desire for reading the passages from spiritual literature again and over again, just as there arises the desire to have more and more of the pleasures we have tasted. The mind will work upon the suggestions received through the literature regarding the nature and qualities of God, and so will be tempted to linger upon the symbol of God. It will then use the same means of meditating on the Name of God, which it uses in reading and discussing the attributes of God. The mind which is accustomed to the hearing and the contemplation of the attributes of God, will, in the same way, be accustomed to the hearing and the meditation of the Name of God. It is thus that the reading of spiritual literature, as constituting Saguṇa-Bhakti, will lead the Sādhaka to the practice of Nirguṇa-Bhakti as well.

2. *Dangers of mere Intellectualism*

There are, however, three great dangers to which the intellectual preparation is exposed, and from which a Sādhaka must take the utmost care to save himself. One is that the Sādhaka may become so absorbed in Saguṇa-Bhakti, and may take to it so excessively, that he may either deliberately refuse to take to Nirguṇa-Bhakti, thinking that Saguṇa-Bhakti is all in all and that Nirguṇa-Bhakti is nothing; or being attracted by the verbal and pictorial imagery he may find it impossible to get out of it. Such a man will wander from place to place in search of God, but not being able to see the immaculate form of God and not being able to know that the highest prayer and praise of God is to utter His Name, will worship the images of God, read all sorts of books, repeat verbal prayers, and do all sorts of penances and activities without having an iota of the silent enjoyment of God. If, unfortunately, imagination should help such a man, the anthropomorphic picture of God will be complete; and further, on account of priestcraft and folly, God may be degraded even to the extent of a being who indulges in the pleasures of the senses.

Another evil which must be strenuously guarded against, is the wilful belief in the greatest truth 'I am the Brahman.' No amount of intellectualism and imagination will be able to create this experience of the identity between the 'I' and the 'Brahman.' Merely to suppose and to continue to suppose that "I am the Brahman," is the greatest pitfall in the spiritual life. No doubt, *Aham Brahmāsmi* is the cardinal tenet of the Vedānta and of the spiritual life. But the identity is to be only gradually and approximately reached as the result of a long process of moral and spiritual progress, aided by the grace of God. It is not a make-believe which hypothetically promises salvation, by hardening it further into a sort of hallucination, by the process of unmeaning repetition of the phrase, *Aham Brahmāsmi.* It is a life of identity, of oneness, which must be lived without the arrogance of the consciousness of the separate existence of the 'I.' The 'I am the Brahman' paradoxically involves the annihilation of the 'I'or the ego. If the Brahman is everywhere, and there is nothing else, then surely where is the room for the existence of the 'I' as a separate something? The 'I am the Brahman' implies the consciousness of the 'I' as the subject of a logical proposition of which its identification with the Brahman is the predicate. In the language of pure intellectualism, or formal logic, both are first thought of as separate, the 'I' and the 'Brahman', and then, later, an identification is formulated by means of the logical proposition. There is an experience of the consciousness of the 'I', but there being no experience of the Brahman, its existence becomes for the mere Vedāntin a postulate or an assumption, and the pity of it is that with the empirical consciousness of the 'I' and the theoretical awareness of the metaphysical existence of the Brahman, the Vedāntin ventures to imitate the Saint by declaring the identity of the 'I' and the 'Brahman.' The saint, on the other hand, first experiences the Brahman as the 'that,' and then looking into himself, he finds that there too there is nothing else but Brahman. It is on the basis of this double experience that the saint can truly declare the self-same proposition of the Vedāntin, *I am the Brahman*. Who is this robber of an 'I,' when there is nothing else but God? asks Rāmadāsa. *Tat-tvamasi*, if rightly interpreted from the viewpoint of spiritual experience, involves first the experience of the Brahman as the 'that,' or *tat*, and secondly, the experience of the Brahman as identical with the 'tvam,' or the subject who has the experience. So the expression *Aham Brahmāsmi* is nothing but a paraphrase of the expression *Tat-tvamasi*, in both of which the experience of the Brahman is followed by that of the omnipresence of the Brahman, whether in the 'I' or any other thing of the world. Śaṁkara echoes the same truth from the spiritual point of view when he says, '*Ādou Brahmāhamasmīyanubhava udite khalvidam Brahma paśchāt*. The identity of the Brahman with the world (*idam*) is experienced afterwards in the same manner in which the identity of the Brahman with the I (*aham*) is first experienced. In short, in the Brahmanic experience of the saints and philosopher-saints, there is the experience of a unitive life, and not the dualistic combination of an experience and an inference known to an intellectualist and to a mere philosopher.

A third danger of intellectualism to which we may briefly refer is that the excess of it may land us in scepticism and nihilism. Instead of being a good instrument for the cause of spiritual life, the intellect acts like a purge which removes itself as well as the disease. A thorough-going scepticism of the Humian type has, as a matter of fact, no philosophy of its own. It is the denial of all knowledge and of itself too. We have only to remember the admission of Hume in this connection, as to how his sceptical philosophy had reacted on his life. He played at tennis, he played at back-gammon, but when he returned home, he found himself gloomy and miserable. If then scepticism makes philosophy impossible and life miserable, it is better to bid it good-bye as early as possible.

3. Relation of Morality to Spiritual Life

We now pass on to the moral preparation of the spiritual life. The question of the relation of morality and religion deserves our attention at this stage. We have already observed that even a sinner may, for no obvious reason, be the recipient, of the grace of God and be introduced to the life of the Spirit. This may arouse the suspicion that the life of morality is of little consequence to the life of the Spirit, but as we have also observed above, a sinner who has once received the grace of God must show by his behaviour that he deserves it a second time. Professor Ranade remarks that a man without moral life is a 'hideous' spectacle and a 'blot'[1] on the spiritual life. Such a person invites ridicule not only upon himself, but upon the spiritual society to which he belongs and upon the spiritual life itself. Rightly will he be called by the people as one who, 'while in penance, is planning sins anew.' His spiritual activities will rightly be considered as a garb to hide his sins. The merit which he will accumulate by means of spiritual exercises will be exhausted in committing various kinds of sins and frauds. He will only be on a slippery path; now appearing to make some progress, but, now, all of a sudden, plunging back into the old ways of living. In short, the spiritual life, if at all possible, without morality, will merely be a stunted growth.

The moral life, on the other hand, though possible, without the spiritual, is like a store of gunpowder which will never explode for want of a spark. It is contended however that the moral virtues have all their meaning due to social life. Truth and goodness, for example, owe all the significance they have to the 'social service' which they make possible. Such an apostle of Truth and Non-violence as Mahātmā Gandhi, who would willingly define his religion as 'Truth is God' says that for the 'realisation of truth, there is no escape from social service.'[2] This identification of morality with religion tacitly assumes that society is all in all and that God (if there be any) is nothing apart from the society. Once more, like Comte and his followers, apostles of social service, have dethroned God and deified man. The moral virtues such as truth and non-violence have all the divine significance on account of the service which is possible of man. The metaphorically eternal life of man and society is considered as the only matrix out of which the moral or the divine conceptions of truth and goodness have sprung up and developed. This means that whatever objective values you wish to attach to the moral qualities, are due to the eternal society of man.

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[1] *Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, p. 288.

[2] *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 21.

We cannot go into a thorough examination of this view for want of space. Suffice it to say that the service of man is not the only motive for being truthful or good. If truth is God, and if it is to be achieved gradually through 'social service,' then it appears that for a Robinson Crusoe or a cave-man, there would be no social service, and as such, no realization of truth and of God. To say that the society affords the field or the scope for the manifestation and cultivation of a moral virtue is one thing; and to say that the whole content and the objective validity of that virtue is entirely due to the relations between man and man is another thing. Truth, Beauty and Goodness. as pointed out very ably by Sorley in his Gifford lectures, have objective value, not because they point out merely the man for whom they are useful, but because they are ultimately rooted in God, who is, as all spiritual idealists claim, at once True, Good and Beautiful. The sweetness of the mango resides in the mango, though somebody is required to declare that it is sweet. Even so, a being (whether man or God) is intrinsically true or good, though the goodness or truth is found useful to society. If the moral qualities are not simply, in the Humian fashion, to flutter in the air, or are not to be resolved into relations (social service) without taking into consideration the terms to be related, then they must primarily belong to someone, and be found in him as forming the very texture of his nature, and then, secondarily, be of use to him in his relations to others, inasmuch as he is intimately bound together with other social and moral beings.

Social service (to proceed with the apparent but necessary digression) is only an occasion on which the moral insight gains strength and keenness by actual practice. It is a poor pragmatic justification of moral worth to say that it 'works' or that it makes the life of us all agreeable or comfortable. As a matter of fact, the moral worth of a man may be misunderstood, and in a society of fools and knaves may be the cause of distress to all. On the other hand, a man of no moral worth may, in some way, be of incalculable service to the society. And yet the truth remains that whether any moral excellence is useful or not to the society at large, sufficient it is if it is appreciated and supported by those few in the society who have themselves got the excellence in them. So, to the question, why should I be moral?, the proper answer is, not that I thereby become useful to the society, but that I have a definite objective value attached to morality, on account of its being ingrained also in other persons who set a high value on it. I must be moral, because the saints who have seen God. have lived a moral life. I must be moral not simply because there is the legal or the social sanction, but the spiritual sanction of the saints. They will be pleased to find that I lead a moral life. And, further, God too will be pleased, for He sums up within Him and is the support of all moral values.

The moral life is therefore doubly valuable; valuable as a positive asset for the well-being of the society, and valuable as the backbone and the pointer of the spiritual life. And yet we must remember that short of the spiritual life, the mere moral life, though covetable by itself, is poor all the same. Though grand in social edifice, it has neither an abiding foundation nor an end which will be considered as an end-in-itself. A moral house built on the foundation of Divine sanction is worthy of being occupied, though it may seem to afford room for only a few members of the society. The end of such a moral code is to facilitate the realization of God, which will then be found to be compatible with any amount of social service.

A spiritual aspirant will therefore do well to imitate the saint and first of all realize God and then distribute the fruit of his realization for the good of all. The behaviour of the mystic is natural with him alone; yet it becomes, as it were, the norm or standard of behaviour for the ordinary man. The moral qualities, of a Siddha, *i.e.* a great saint, are the natural results of God-realization: it is impossible that they should be also the marks of a Sādhaka *i.e.*, an aspirant. But let him assume the virtues if he has not got them; for in course of time, by practice and by imitation, and by meditation and devotion, they will be found in him too. The way down of the Siddha will be the way up of the Sādhaka. In the chapters regarding the 'Criteria of God-realization' and characteristics of 'An Ideal Saint,' we shall see how the several qualities of the saint flow naturally from the high quality of God-realization. Naturally, the description of the moral preparation of a Sādhaka is nothing but a corollary drawn from the observation of the life of a Siddha. So, we shall deal with some of the moral qualities which will, on account of our imitation of the saint, make our path to God smooth and safe.

Implicit faith in the Guru is perhaps the greatest of the moral virtues. To consider the Guru as equal to God and never to consider him as man, is the first and the last requirement of a spiritual aspirant. At the outset it may be only blind credulity to believe that the Guru is God, but with meditation and experience, the disciple gains insight, and the blind credulity is gradually transformed into a rational faith.

As the result of this growing rational faith in the Guru, the whole of the spiritual life of the disciple revolves round two things. One is the purity of life, and the other, the meditation on God. A complete account of meditation will appear in the two chapters on Devotion. So far as the purity of life is concerned, it is either external or internal. The external purity is attained by doing various acts, such as washing one's body, under-going penances, and regularity and method in diet and exercise. The internal, which matters most, arises on account of knowledge and good actions; and this becomes possible only when evil and sinful thoughts are purged out by the constant contemplation of good and righteous ones. Perfect internal purity will arise only when the mind becomes completely rid of desires, avarice and anger, which according to the Bhagavadgītā are the three doors that open into hell. But it is impossible that the qualities of desirelessness and angerlessness will be first established, without the realization of God, who alone is without any desire or anger. And yet, to a certain extent, there must be an effort on the part of the aspirant to cultivate these great moral qualities even prior to God-realization.

A very practicable method has been suggested by the saints, by way of compromise, between a life full of desires and a life without them, namely, to have only such desires as will not make the spiritual life impossible. It is a paradox of spiritual life that it is not possible without annihilation of desires, and that desirelessness is not possible without spiritual life. Psychologically, it is a riddle which appears hard to solve. A desire, if satisfied, produces another of its kind; and if killed or suppressed, it is born again in a new and violent form. The saints have very remarkably succeeded in solving the riddle, by pointing out the compatibility of the two lives, the worldly and the spiritual, though strictly speaking, the two are just the opposites of each other. The great emotional urges in life cannot simply be eradicated; life will be torn thereby. Neither can they be allowed to have their full sway; life will be crushed under its own weight. The saints have given us perhaps the greatest moral guidance in allowing us, on the one hand, to satisfy the natural appetites of the body and the mind, and thus make the spiritual life possible, and, on the other hand, urging on us the necessity of so enhancing the spiritual life in intensity and duration, that the tempest of the sensual life will gradually calm down into peace.

It is enough from the moral point of view if the Sādhaka makes a vow to observe two things very rigorously. One is, not to cast a sinful eye on a woman, and the other, not to covet another man's wealth. This leaves ample scope for satisfaction of the sexual instinct as well as for honest toil and labour for one's own bread. On the one hand, there is the moderate satisfaction of natural desires; on the other, the exuberance of the passions is downright suppressed and burnt ruthlessly by the fire of meditation and thought. The Sādhaka will have his conscience very clear, and will go in for meditation almost with a clean state of mind. If, instead of making the vow unto himself, he makes it in public or before his Guru, then, the fear of breaking it will be an additional motive which will keep him moderate. As a matter of fact, if a man only remains on his guard regarding the two evils due to woman and wealth and resorts to meditation daily and without any holidays, the spiritual progress is bound to be there. God is not unkind or a miser to withhold His grace from such a person.

Of course, there are a number of other moral virtues, which, if cultivated, will facilitate the spiritual progress.

The Sādhaka should, once for all, bid farewell to idleness, sleep and the sense of shame which one may feel in saying his prayers to God. The span of life being limited and uncertain in its length, the Sādhaka should consider that it is his greatest treasure, and, as such, must be turned to good account. If idleness or sleep or other considerations were to destroy a major portion of our life-time, then spiritually considered, we are the greatest losers. One must therefore make haste to realize God. One does not know when one is to die, and what will be the condition of his body in old age. The Sādhaka should therefore constantly think in advance of death and old age, and should take to meditation till they are far away. The fear of old age and death acts as a great spur to the spiritual life.

Love of solitude and a dislike for crowds are very essential conditions without which there will be no substantial spiritual progress. To meet God in crowds is possible only after one has met Him in solitude, and not *vice versa*. Deliberately, therefore, one must cultivate the habit of sitting for meditation in solitary places, and even in places where bodies are being cremated. This will serve the purpose of urgently bringing home the truth as given to us by Rāmadāsa that the 'only profit in the mortal fair is to realize God.'[1]

To keep oneself in the company of the good and the holy, and to avoid the company of the evil and the wicked are again absolutely necessary for maintaining and enhancing the life of devotion and surrender. It must be always remembered with gratitude and love that it is the saint and none else who has shown the Sādhaka the path of God. Naturally, nothing which is spiritually important will ever remain hidden and uncommunicable in an assembly of saints. The Sādhaka must therefore make it his life-task to seek the company of the saints with humility and reverence, and destroy his egoism, disbelief and doubts; that he should avoid the company of the unbelievers, the wicked and the uxorious follows as a corollary.

Truthfulness, at least with reference to God and the Guru, extraordinary courage not to stop at anything but the experience of God, patience to suffer any amount of hardships and calamities, to turn a deaf ear to the praises of oneself, being equanimous and tranquil in spite of the dualities, exhibiting the tender emotions of compassion and pity for the distress of others, and above all, the remembering of the Name of God at all times are, as Jñāneśvara says, the 'flowers in the garland that adorns the neck of the Dispassionate.'[1]

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[1] *Mysticism in Māhārashtra*, p. 387.

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[1] *Mysticism in Māhārashtra*, p. 91

7

Patanjala-Yoga and Bhakti

1. *Salient Features of Pātañjala-Yoga*

WE HAVE NOW come to the mid-current of the spiritual life. The sādhaka has left behind him the conditions of the bound and the mere aspirant, and has thrown himself in the spiritual stream: He has grown confident on account of the newly acquired strength of his two arms, namely, discrimination and dispassion (Viveka and Vairāgya). Yet, he is no tough swimmer and cannot boast of having over-ridden completely and finally the evils and temptations which cross and recross the life of the Spirit. For this, it will be better if he makes himself fit both mentally and physically, and then carries on the struggle further by the aid of devotion and meditation. Yogin as he is and intends to be of the Devotional type, he will be immensely benefited if he trains himself under the discipline of the Pātañjala-Yoga.

The Pātañjala-Yoga claims to be a way of liberation and bliss. It will be the height of presumption to say that it is not. But in view of the various points of difference between it and the Yoga of Devotion, and in view of certain peculiar characteristics of the latter which are absent from the former, we are tempted to say with the author of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad and with that of the Bhagavadgītā that the only way to know and to reach God is through an exclusive, faithful and unceasing devotion to God. If it be said that the Pātañjala-Yoga too speaks of God and of devotion to God, we have to say that it makes such reference in one of its Sūtras by employing the particle 'Vā' meaning 'or', definitely suggesting thereby that devotion to God is a co-ordinate means of attaining Samādhi (Pā. I-23). On two more occasions there is a reference to the devotion to God as a sub-variety of one of the eight Aṅgas of Yoga (Pā. II-1, 32). So the Pātañjala-Yoga-Darśana is not itself clear whether Bhakti-Yoga is subordinate to or co-ordinate with the Yoga of Patañjali. Ignoring this defect of inconsistency, and taking for granted that Bhakti-Yoga is treated as if on a par with the Pātañjala-Yoga, we have to raise the question whether a devotionless Yoga can lead us to liberation and to God. The mere Yogin without the love of God will often turn into a stoic, and feel that he is liberated; the devotee too will feel that he is liberated, but liberated on account of the grace of God; and though capable of presenting the sterner qualities of the mind, he will necessarily be full of compassion for others.

What we wish to bring out in this chapter is that a combination of the two Yogas is desirable from the point of view of spiritual progress. The body, the mind and the spirit live together ; naturally, if the fitness of the body and of the mind helps the spirit to have its ascent, it is all the more desirable. There will be very little spiritual progress, if the energies of the spirit are spent in overcoming the disabilities of the body and the temptations of the mind; but if, by the practice of Yoga, the body and the mind are disciplined, it is an invaluable help for a Sādhaka to concentrate all his energies on his sole objective of realizing God by means of devotion. If the question is to be categorically and simply stated, devotion, by itself, is sufficient and is the only means to realize God; but if there are other means to facilitate the way of devotion, so much the better for it. The Yoga of Patañjali (excluding that portion from it which deals with God and devotion to Him, as borrowed from a co-ordinate system) becomes therefore a highly serviceable adjunct to the Yoga of devotion.

The Pātañjala-Yoga has its brilliant and notable characteristics, which we shall first briefly note. We shall then enumerate a number of points in which it differs from Bhakti-Yoga, and then finally, make the transition to the latter.

1. It claims the highest mystical experience as the end of the science. Experience of the Self by the self is definitely referred

to twice in the Sūtras (Pā. I-3; IV-34). It is known as 'Kaivalya', or 'Chit-Śakti'.

2. Abhyāsa and Vairāgya, that is, practice and non-attachment are the two great means, whereby the end is achieved. These two means are referred to also in the Bhagavadgītā (VI-35), and so, the yoga is to be continued for a long time, always, and with the attitude of regard. This reveals that the author of the Sūtras has a great psychological insight. He understands that to practice a thing for long and without break is possible only when there is regard for that thing, and that virtue consists in the practice of that virtue (Pā. I-12, 14).

3. Praṇava or the syllable 'Om' is the symbol of God; and devotion consists in the meditation on this symbol. As a result of this meditation, the Ātman is realized, and then, all evils, diseases and difficulties vanish. (Pā I-23, 27-29).

4. The way to purify the mind is to get oneself befriended by the happy, to show compassion to the afflicted, to be delighted at the sight of the meritorious, and to ignore the sinful (Pā. I-33).

5. When the moral qualities are firmly established in a man the results are wonderful ; *e.g.*, when non-killing is established, even natural enemies who are near such a man give up their enmity of their own accord; when truth, anything is obtained without sacrifices; when non-stealing, acquisition of all jewels; when celibacy, acquiring extraordinary power; when purity, there arises contempt for one's own body and for the bodies of others; mind becomes joyful and steady, the senses are curbed, and the man becomes fit for the realization of the Ātman; when contentment, incomparable bliss; when the meditation on Mantras, the seeing and speaking with the gods; and when the devotion of God, Samādhi is accomplished (Pā. II-35-45).

6. Good posture is that which is steady and comfortable. Prāṇāyāma, *i.e.*, the control of breath, combined with posture, makes concentration easy, and enables one to get control over the senses; the senses withdraw themselves from their objects, and intellect (Buddhi) becomes clear and penetrating (Pā. II-35-55).

7. Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi are the three stages of one and the same process of concentration on an object.. In the first, there is the concentration of attention; in the second, there

is the identity of the subject and the object, and yet there is the consciousness of the feeling of identical life: in the third, the unitive life is simply lived without the separate feeling of 'I am living this unitive life.' Samādhi is also spoken of as Sampra-jñāta and Asampraјñāta, or Sabīja and Nirbīja, or again, as Savikalpa and Nirvikalpa (Pā. III 1-3, 7 & 8). Professor M. Hiriyanna seems to have taken the two forms of Samādhi as differing in kind. 'The lower Samādhi is quite intelligible psychologically; but the higher, because it presupposes the suppression of the mind, takes us beyond normal psychical life. We pass in it to the realm of mysticism.'[1] To us the two Samādhis appear as only differing in degree; the second is only the later stage of the first. So long as there is the consciousness of bliss, of 'Isness', of the subject-object relation as indicated by the feeling, 'I am the Experiencer,' there is the Savikalpa Samādhi; Nirvikalpa is just the next stage, which is to be only experienced silently, and of which no language can give any description.

8. The Yogin acquires supernatural powers on account of Saṅyama (Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi put together, Pā. III-4) on various objects; *e.g.*, he can know the past and the future, can interpret the language of any creature, and know the past births of any person. When Saṅyama is on the mind of another person, he can know what is passing in his mind, in a general way. The yogin becomes invisible; foretells the time and place of his death; acquires the strength of elephants etc; knows everything in all the worlds including the movements of the planets and the stars and the anatomy of his body etc.; becomes free from hunger and thirst; has visions of saints and Siddhas; realizes the Self, and, as a result of this, has a knowledge of supernatural sounds, touches, visions, tastes and smells, even when he comes out of his Samādhi in the wakeful, ordinary life. He gets entrance anywhere without hindrance, enters and comes out in like manner, in and from water, mud, thorns etc.; looks like fire and flies in air; gets control over the five elements and senses; enslaves the entire universe; acquires liberation by burning desires in the fire of Vairāgya and by the purification of the Buddhi (Pā. III, 17-55).

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[1] *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 297.

9. The Yogin has to meet with innumerable obstacles in his way. Beautiful women from heaven try to allure him by offering all sorts of pleasures of the senses (Pā. III, 51).

10. Desires are difficult to conquer; but one who sees that the Ātman or the Puruṣa is never contaminated by the contact of Buddhi, which however becomes sullied by the Guṇas and the desires, will be able to achieve final liberation or Mokṣa. If the Buddhi is trained not to become contaminated, then, gradually, the Guṇas die their own death; desires are burnt in their seeds and the Buddhi gets a clear image of the Puruṣa (*Pā*, III, 55).

2. *Points of difference between Yoga and Bhakti*

Though there is much to be recommended in the above as being worthy to be achieved for moral and spiritual progress, and though there is much to be coveted in the supernatural powers as adding to the glory and success of human life as a whole, the Pātañjala-Yoga appears to fall short of the aims and ideals of Bhakti-Yoga. The ideal of Self-realization, the means of Abhyāsa and Vairāgya as also other means of posture and Prāṇāyām, the meditation on the Praṇava, *i.e.*, Oṁ, the purification of the mind and the control of the senses are some of the prominent features which deserve the highest recommendation. But there are others, such as the acquisition of supernatural powers which, though desirable in their own way, are not necessary from the point of view of God-realization. We shall therefore now point out how in some respects the two Yogas differ fundamentally from each other.

1. The Yoga-Sūtras contain a reference, no doubt, to the experience of Self-realization; and though, truly speaking, as mentioned also in the Bhagavadgītā, there remains nothing to be done by one who sports with the Ātman and who is satisfied with the Ātmanic life (*B.G.* II-17), the devotee of God, as Tukārāma tells us, remains in the world after God-realization for the simple reason of doing good to the world. A life of disinterested service for the only purpose of turning people towards God is advocated by almost all Indian saints, even after God has been realized. That is why the question of how a saint behaves in the world after he has realized God has become a topic of great and absorbing interest with all the writers of devotional mysticism. 'We are the residents of

Vaikuṇṭha' declares Tukārāma, 'but we have come here to worship the saints, and save people that have gone astray.' This note of merciful redemption as the work of God, and the necessity of living therefore a morally disinterested life even after God-realization are absent from the Yoga.

2. The Samādhi of devotion is compatible with action; it is doubtful whether it is so with the Samādhi of Yoga; for the Yoga-ideal appears to increase the duration of Samādhi which may last for days together continuously.

3. God, the object of devotion, is capable of being realized in all the conditions of life, the waking, the sleeping and the dreaming; the object of Yogic Samādhi—and it may be anything—whether Savikalpa or Nirvikalpa, is achieved during Samādhi only. When the Yogin comes out of the state of Samādhi the objects of his Samādhi may vanish, and there may rush in other objects on his consciousness, which were held over for the time being. For the true devotee, on the other hand, God being the only focal object of his consciousness at all times, other objects remain in his marginal consciousness.

4. The Samādhi of Yoga is induced deliberately by the Yogin and with effort; while that of devotion is being partly induced by the attractive nature of the mystical object and partly by meditation on the Name of God. It is therefore comparatively effortless and natural, and is known as Sahaja-Samādhi. Yoga appears to be the journey of a single person; Devotion requires two, the devotee and the God or the Guru. That is why, such phenomena as repentance, confession and conversion, prayer and grace, the dark nights of the soul and redemption from them, the initiation into spiritual life by the Guru, service of the Guru as to God, are all absent from the Yoga.

5. Such phenomena, again, as tears of joy, reverence, awe, fear at the sight of the mystical object, and the ecstasies, the raptures and the dancings which show a tumultous enjoyment of God are all unknown to Yoga. The Yogin has to retire into his closet and shut up the windows of his senses before he can expect to go into a trance. The devotee too does so in the earlier stages, but in the later stages, he need not necessarily run away from society. He enjoys the highest possible joy even in the midst of great crowds; he enjoys solitude where there is

none. 'There arises the ecstatic joy' says Rāmdāsa, when without shame of the people and without entertaining any doubt, the Kīrtana is performed.' God being the only object of attention, the entire surroundings are forgotten.

6. Kumbhaka occupies a prominent place in the exercise of Prāṇāyāma. It is of two kinds, one internal and the other external. The internal consists of the duration in which the inhaled wind is controlled and not allowed to go out; and the external consists of the duration in which the wind is not allowed to enter, after it has been exhaled. Now this suspension of breath, positive and negative, which is performed twice deliberately, mechanically and mathematically for the physiological and mental purposes of purifying the body and the mind in the Yogic system, occurs naturally and without any effort on account of the emotions that enter into the life of devotion. It is a common psychological fact that when the mind is under a sudden emotional stress, there occurs as a reaction, the suspension of breath. Fear, for example, creates the instinctive desire to protect oneself from the object of fear. The animal trying to hide itself from its enemy which is very close, or a man trying to hear a low and indistinct sound coming from afar, inevitably suspends the breath for a while. It is not by an act of will that the saint suspends his breath; it is on account of the ecstatic joy which he feels at the sight, the sound, the touch or the smell of the mystical object, the ardent longing that the spiritual experience should grow, in intensity, volume and duration, and the curious mingling of the various emotions in his heart, that the breathing itself automatically stops for a while. The saint enjoys this state of Sahaja, that is natural Kumbhaka, but it is not a state of vacant stillness; it is full of divine presence and of emotions arising out of a life in God.

7. The visions, the sounds, the smells etc., which are mentioned in the Yoga, are mere sign-posts which cause impediment in the state of Samādhi, but which are the source of great merit in the waking life after Samādhi. No doubt there is an element of truth in these statements. They are mere sign-posts in the sense that there is no limit to spiritual life; and they are considered as obstacles, because it is likely that in attending to them, the Name itself might be forgotten and the love with which it is uttered may diminish in its intensity. Yet from the

truly spiritual point of view, the visions, sounds and smells themselves constitute the Divine life, and so will never act as impediments, if the Sādhaka takes only the precaution of not forgetting the Name of God. 'It is by the sight and contact of this spiritual object that great merit is accumulated'', says Rāmadāsa; 'and it is by holding conversation with it that doubts melt away.' It is in this way only that the mystic grows in his experience.

8. The supernatural powers or the Siddhis, though admitted by Yoga as obstacles in the path of liberation are also described as the results of Dhārañā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi, on certain objects and principles. The Siddhis in the Yoga of Devotion are simply the by-products of meditation and love of God. In the house of a devotee, 'the supernatural powers (Ṛiddhi-Siddhis) are, as it were, the drawers of water' says Tukārāma. Power is hand-maid to the Love of God. When the devotee is the creditor and God the debtor, what wonder is there that the devotee should become powerful?

The saints consider Power as dirt when compared with Spiritual Knowledge. The desire to possess power indicates that the physical body is considered as more important than the Spirit, as Rāmadāsa puts it. 'The considerations of the body are the considerations of the fool and ignorant', says Tukārāma. God is realized only when all such desires for power, wealth, and glory are rooted out. The saints find nothing common between the powers and the love of God. Anything in the heavens and on the earth is so incomparably low when compared with the grace of God that Tukārāma does not care if he is starved and afflicted in the body, provided he remembers the Name of God.

In the lives of almost all the saints, miracles have taken place. In a way, it can therefore be said of these saints that they were the authors of the miracles, and, as such, they possessed the supernatural powers. The reason given however by the saints themselves for the occurrence of the miracles is that they occur because the saints live a meritorious life full of goodness and devotion. It is only God who works the miracles for them when it is absolutely necessary to protect the devotee and his reputation. Miracles are not wrought or manufactured to order by the saints, though, very often, they possess the power to work them. It is a great boon to the devotee of God that, many a time, he does not know that he has come to possess a supernatural power, and if anything happens in a supernatural manner, he thinks that it is due not to his power but to the grace of God for which he becomes all the more humble and grateful. The occurrence of a miracle, in short, is common to both Yoga and Devotion, and is, in a way, the test of whether power has been achieved or not. And yet, while in Yoga, it is attributed to the Yogic exercises and is always consciously brought about, in the Yoga of Devotion, it is attributed not so much to the devotion of the devotee as to the grace of God; and it comes about unconsciously for the devotee. As Rāmadāsa and all other saints point out emphatically, miracle-mongering is no test of spiritual life.

9. The argument of the Yoga-Sūtras is perfectly cogent when it is stated that wonderful results follow as the moral qualities become firmly established in a person. Certainly, a person need not be afraid of anything in the world, if he has caused fear to none. This belief in the moral law as governing the universe in a just and equitable manner, and as demanding the behaviour in conformity to it, is really possible for a very few. Apart from this high ideal which is equally true for Yoga and for Devotion, we have to raise two questions, the answers to which will mark the distinction between them. The first question is, what constitutes any particular moral quality? The second is, whether it can be completely acquired independently of our attitude towards God? To take only one example of a moral quality, Ahiṁsā or compassion: Ahiṁsā is one of the five Yamas; and Yama, in its turn is one of the eight Aṅgas of Yoga. According to the commentary of Vyāsa, it consists of non-injury or non-malice to anybody in any manner and at any time', and requires the further support of truthfulness etc. This quality is to be practised, along with other virtues, indefinitely till it is perfected. As opposed to this, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna in the Bhagavadgītā that "Notwithstanding the fact of having killed all these people, he neither kills anybody nor is killed by anybody." (*BG*, XVIII-17). This apparent contradiction is resolved by the author of the Bhagavadgītā who says that such a person behaves without the sense of egoism. He learns wisdom by looking at things *sub specie aeternitatis*

rather than *sub specie humanis*. He is simply the instrument of God and as such is not bound by the actions.

Tukārāma defines compassion in much the same way as embracing two contradictory actions: 'It is that quality which enables one to protect the beings by destroying the wicked among them.' This definition of mercy fits in with the description of the two-fold mission of God on this earth, as described in the Bhagavadgītā (*BG*, IV-8), viz., 'the protection of the good, and the destruction of the evil-doers.' We thus clearly see that according to the Bhagavadgītā and the teachings of the saints, the moral worth of the qualities is not due to the qualities *per se*, but to the spiritual or divine function that is served by them. In another Abhaṅga which Tukārāma is reported to have composed for relieving the acute bodily pain of Rāmeśvarabhaṭṭa, he has expressed exactly the same idea as referred to above in the Yoga-Sūtra; but he explains that the wonderful result is not due to the moral quality so much as to the devotion to the Immanent Being in the hearts of all. To quote it : 'If the mind is pure, then verily even enemies become friends; neither tigers nor serpents can hurt him in any way, poison may become nectar, the flames of fire become cool; all these things will happen when one knows that there is the same Immanent Being in the hearts of all'.[1] In short, as the saints point out, the moral quality, whatever may be its content, gains all its strength and perfection only on account of the realization of God; and so the wonderful results that follow are mainly due to the realization of God.

10. Yoga is defined as the control or the suppression of the workings of the mind (*Pā*, I-2). No doubt self-control has its own and important place in the moral life, and without it the moral life is impossible. But as Jñāneśvara tells us, 'The practice of Yoga, which involves the strength of Āsana, may, if at all, bring the senses under control.' As opposed to this, if the Yogin meditates on God as directed by his spiritual teacher, he becomes, as Jñāneśvara says, 'full, inside and outside, of Sāttvika qualities. The strength of egoism disappears. He forgets the objects of sense. The senses lose their power. The mind remains folded in the heart.'[2] So, the control that

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[1] *Mysticism in Mahārāshtra*, p. 275.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 122.

results from meditation is natural and certain, while that due to postures without meditation, is artificial, uncertain and attended with the risks of great relapses due to the suppression of emotions. Along with self-control, as modern psychology tells us, transformation of emotions is of the greatest value even from the moral point of view. The emotions and the impulses are the sap of life; wisdom lies not in drying them up, but using them for new and higher purposes in life. Emotions of anger and love, for example, are of utmost value both for moral and spiritual life, if anger is developed into hatred and animosity for whatever is ugly and bad, and love into attachment, sincerity and devotion for whatever is truly good, noble and beautiful. Instead of living a life of indifference untouched by anger and love, which is of course not the meaning of 'Sthitaprajña', a true servant of God will prefer fully to express both the emotions on proper occasions, and yet, paradoxically, remain unaffected by both of them. Anger and love are equally present and not present in a person who finds his peace in God. Such a person is morally great, because he knows the proportionate value of the different emotions in the building up of sentiments and character; he is also spiritually great because the various contradictory elements find their ultimate anchorage in God.

8

Types of Devotion

THE MECHANISM OF the spiritual life will be complete with the description of the way of meditation and surrender. Now that our Sādhaka has been equipped in all possible ways, we have but to give him in his hand the only worthy weapon of a spiritual soldier, *viz.*, the sword of meditative Ātma-Nivedana. With Viveka and Vairāgya to protect him, with the firm Yogic horse to give him the physical and mental balance, he will now march on to kill all the distinctions of the Avidyā and achieve the kingdom of God.

Devotion, as described in the Nārada-Bhakti-Sūtras and in the Śāndilya-Sūtras, is an 'intense, whole-hearted attachment to God.' In the beginning it is natural that a Sādhaka should feel drawn more to the Personal than to the Impersonal God. But if we remember that the Personal and the Impersonal are but two aspects of the Brahman, as Tukārāma tells us, the love that is shown to the Personal will, in course of time, develop into the love for the Impersonal. It is a great mystery of the spiritual life that the Ātman or the Brahman which eludes all attempts to know it, and which frustrates every kind of means, should become the target of devotion and meditation. Let us therefore begin at once with the nature and stages of this devotional life.

Nine types of devotion are mentioned in almost all good works of devotional literature of the saints of Mahārāshtra. We shall however follow Rāmadāsa in his treatment of the nine types and describe the characteristics of each one of them, and show how all of them are necessary for the realization of God.

Logically, it is not a good division; for, the classes involve and overlap each other; and yet, each has a peculiarity of its own and is therefore valuable to a more or less extent in its own way.

1. Śravaṇa

Śravaṇa (hearing) of spiritual knowledge is a means which is throughout of great importance in the spiritual life. It is at the root of all knowledge whether spiritual or not; for one must first hear that which he does not know. Even when one is reading he must needs first hear the words which he reads and then understand them. And even when one recalls some words or meditates or constructs an idea in words, he cannot avoid mentally listening to that which he is recalling, meditating or constructing. The meaning of a word will never dawn on consciousness unless it is first heard along with the meaning of it. Similarly, when the spiritual instruction is first imparted by the Guru as the symbol of God, it is heard by the aspirant; and it must continue to be heard even after the meaning of the word, namely, God Himself, becomes manifest. Of course, at the time of initiation, the spiritual instruction is simply potent with the meaning of it; but the meaning becomes manifest gradually as the Sādhaka advances in his spiritual career.

It is a peculiar characteristic of Śravaṇa that the hearer becomes one with the meaning of the word, in the very moment when he understands the meaning of it, though in the very next moment, he may use the word and the meaning of it as objective entities separate from himself. Both epistemologically and metaphysically, we may say that knowledge consists in the identity of the knower and the known, or as Prof. Ranade would put it, in the 'spiritual apperception' between them. Unless the speaker or the hearer of the word meets the meaning of the word, there would be no knowledge of it. God-realization, which is the meaning of the spiritual instruction, *i.e.* the Name of God, will, from this point of view, be apperceived by the devotee, only when he meditates upon it and hears it day in and day out. In other words, as the result of constant Śravaṇa, God, who constitutes the hidden meaning of the Name or Logos, will manifest before the devotee and be experienced as one with him. When this feeling of identity between the knower and the known, the subject and the object, the Jīva and the Śiva, or the Sādhaka who meditates on the Name and God, remains constant and continuous for a number of moments, it constitutes what is known as the unitive life or Samādhi. Śravaṇa therefore is both the beginning and the end of spiritual life.

Where there is no Śravaṇa or Manana (that is, attention directed to the meaning) there can be no peace; there will be an illusion of being liberated. Whoever is on the spiritual path, whether aspirant, Sādhaka or Siddha, for him Śravaṇa is inevitable. It must be resorted to daily, just as food and water are taken daily. Liberation does not consist of a single event, so that, when it is over, the Sādhaka is not required to adopt the means of Śravaṇa. Every moment of life we must feel that we are free, and so every moment of life must be utilized in Śravaṇa. It produces in our mind love for God; clears the doubts; purifies the mind; enables us to control it; does away with the sense of egoism and with that of the material self; creates in us non-attachment for the worldly objects; sharpens the intellect and offers us real peace. Śravaṇa as a means of Śaguṇa devotion, consists of hearing about the attributes and praises of God; and as a means of Nirguṇa devotion, in the hearing of the Name of God. For a Sādhaka both are necessary, because they are the complementary means to each other.

2. *Kīrtana*

Kīrtana is another means which gives a great impetus to the spiritual development of the person who performs it as well as of those who attend it. It is a sort of public prayer which has not only a disciplinary value, but also a value due to suggestion and sympathetic feeling. The minds of them all work in unison, and presumably for the common purpose of singing the glory of God. They act and react upon each other and so gain in the intensity of their devotion.

The Kīrtana should be done solely for the purpose of increasing the devotion to God and not for the purposes of becoming rich by accepting money in exchange for it, or for pleasing oneself and others by means of music and the descriptions of beautiful heavenly women. The desire for riches will make a man greedy, and people will become tired of him soon.

Contemplation of women will necessarily make him and the people lose their moral courage. Similarly, it is very likely that they will be carried away by music and the play of instruments, and forget God. Riches and women are definitely two great obstacles in the path of an aspirant. How can he think of God if his mind is full of the thoughts of money and woman? But, if he takes care not to go away from God, music and the various instruments will be very useful in increasing the pitch of his devotion.

There must, above all, be a firm faith in singing the Name of God; for it is the symbol of God. And yet, so far as the Kīrtana is concerned, especially in a temple where it is being performed before an image, one should not speak in such a manner as will bring the Saguṇa devotion in disrepute. For the people who will hear him may cut short the life of devotion in two ways: 'ignorance it is, they will say, to worship an image of God, as the Brahman alone is real'; and when the occasion for Nirguṇa devotion would arise, they will know nothing about it on account of their own ignorance and confusion of ideas. Therefore one ought to be very cautious in speaking about Saguṇa and Nirguṇa devotion at the proper moment and proper place. Before an image of God, he should never give a discourse on Nirguṇa, but should describe with enthusiasm and love the attributes and the deeds of God. He may add to this the melody of voice, the music of the instrument, the clapping of the hands etc., and the audience will be so delighted with the concourse that they will be thrilled with joy and shed tears of joy. The Haridāsa (the man who performs the Kīrtana) too will be so intent on God that he will forget his bodily consciousness, forget the presence of the people around him and will dance and sing without reserve or shame. Being filled with ecstasy and devotion, wherever he will cast his eye, he will see nothing but God. People too will catch up the emotion, forget their egoism and sense of shame and will irresistibly get up and begin to dance and sing the Name and glory of God. They will gather again and again and fill up the heavens with their loud praises of God. No wonder if such an assembly should feel that they breathe a common air and live a common life; and no wonder if such a feeling be considered as a veritable means of promoting and spreading the love of God.

While Śravaṇa is both Saguṇa and Nirguṇa, Kīrtaṇa is Saguṇa devotion only. It is known as Nirūpaṇa when one gives a philosophical discourse to the audience. Kīrtana (including Bhajana) and Nirūpaṇa involve Śravaṇa Bhakti too; yet as described above, they have their peculiar characteristics.

3. *Smaraṇa*

Smaraṇa or remembering the Name of God is yet another means of spiritual progress. In fact, it is the only means of God-realization as we shall see after we have done with the various kinds of devotion. We have observed that the secret of knowing God must be learnt from the mystics who have already realized Him; none else has the power to show us the way. Some one must reveal it. To this extent, we most frankly admit that spiritual knowledge is 'revealed' knowledge; and to this extent, the aspirant who receives the spiritual instruction and the Guru who imparts it together form an 'esoteric' circle. However much we may think about it, the relation between the Name as the symbol of God and God Himself is a great mystery. We have no other means of testing this mysterious knowledge as a fact, except by actual experience. To the question, why we should expect that God will be realized by means of meditation on the Name of God, there are only two possible answers. One is that experience alone can prove it. The other is that there is the concensus of opinions of all the mystics the world over, who, as Prof. Ranade says, have 'no racial, no communal, no national prejudices among them, but on the contrary, have 'a personal, common, intimate, mystical experience.'[1] To doubt the testimony of the greatest mystics of all times and climes, some of whom are also great rationalists, will in no way appear justifiable. Meditation on the Name of God will be the only means of not only realizing God but also of warding off all evils, difficulties, and temptations, and of acquiring moral worth, mental peace and intellectual clarification. How to meditate upon the Name and when to meditate will be very interesting problems which we shall take up in the next chapter.

Smaraṇa, whether it is loudly done, as if from house-tops, or silently in mind, involves śravaṇa. There is, strictly speaking, no harm in celebrating the Name loudly from house-tops; but the aspirant is naturally shy of the people, and so, he should not, invite ridicule from them. Therefore, Smaraṇa should be only mental. If the Name is uttered loudly, it may appear that it is Saguṇa-Bhakti on a par with Kīrtana. Be it noted, however, that in all cases, the uttering of God's Name (as given by the Guru) is nothing but Nirguṇa-Bhakti. If the Name be self-chosen, then as it is chosen on account of the attributes of God, which to our fancy are the connotation of that Name, the uttering of it may be said to constitute Saguṇa-Bhakti.

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[1] *Mysticism in Mahārāshtra*, Preface, pp. 2, 3, 16.

4. *Pāda-Sevana*

Pāda-Sevana, that is resorting to the feet, constitutes yet another kind of devotion, and a means of spiritual development. It will be Saguṇa devotion, when the devotee touches the feet of his Guru, or places his head on the feet of an image of God. But if there is no image, and if one wishes to have absolutely no anthropomorphic picture of God, how will it be possible for him to practise this form of devotion? As an aspirant he is yet too far off to have the mystic experience of seeing God's feet everywhere so that he will worship them at all places. But when this height of Nirguṇa-Bhakti is not available, and when the image of God does not please him, how should he proceed? He should, in that case, lower down his head in humility at the feet of his Guru, who is God incarnate, at once Saguṇa and Nirguṇa. On account of the physical body, his Guru is like a Saguṇa image of God; and on account of the fact that God has found a secure lodgment in his heart and is seen by him in all directions, the Guru is the immaculate Nirguṇa God himself. To wait on such a Guru is to wait on God; to worship him and to serve him in all possible ways in order that he should be pleased is to serve and worship God.

But then, how is it possible that one person should be available for a number of disciples for a worship of this kind? The Guru may not like it. Nor does it look well to do so; and there is the danger that the practice may degenerate into many ignoble forms of superstition and ignorance. And yet what should one do, if unfortunately the physical body of the Guru be destroyed by death, or if the Guru is away at a great distance? Pāda-sevana does not mean literally the resorting to the physical feet. It should be interpreted rather liberally. If the

Guru is to be honoured as God, then certainly what he asks us to do must be relied upon with trust. The Guru hands over the most precious thing in all the universe. He shows us the way to God and imparts to us spiritual knowledge in the form of the Divine Name. This is the seed which must be grown up into a huge tree by our efforts. To do that which he has told us to do, to meditate, in other words, on the Name of God with humility and regard is to give all honour to him and to God, and is verily the real shampooing of his feet and the rendering of any other service to him. Another thing which we must do is to remember him with regard and reverence, and mentally fall prostrate at his feet as a token of gratitude.

5. *Arcanā*

Arcana or worship is still another kind of devotion. It consists in the actual or mental worship of the various images of God, and offering to Him the best things which the devotee wishes to keep for himself. When there is neither the image nor the material with which he should worship it, he should create by imagination both of them and have the satisfaction of performing the worship. Even such mental worship has its utility. When the best things in life which we cherish most and wish to have for ourselves, are offered to God even mentally, it constitutes the first lesson in dedication and surrender to God which is the end of all devotion. Non-attachment to the worldly life cannot be achieved all of a sudden, and without it there will be no development of spiritual life worth the name. The older in age one becomes, the greater the attachment one feels for the sensuous pleasures of life. The only way in which dispassion or non-attachment will arise and grow in us is by securing the love of God; and one of the ways in which we shall secure the love of God is by offering Him the best things in our life.

It is ordinary, commonsense knowledge that we offer decent presents to those whom we love and expect their love in return. God's love is infinitely superior to human love; it does not however expect precious things from us, but only the sincerity and love with which we make the offerings. That is why God equally welcomes all things, good or ordinary. It is not the quality of the things offered, but the quality of the mind with which the things are offered to God, that is tested. It is for this purpose, as Rāmadāsa tells us, that whatever we do physically or mentally, or whatever is dear to us, whether wealth or other precious thing in life, we should dedicate with the purest motive to God. Jñāneśvara also echoes the same sentiment when he tells us that actionlessness may be secured by the offering of the flowers of all our actions to God, without egoistically attributing them to ourselves. In short, the real Arcana-Bhakti elevates us from the mere idol-worship, where such things as water and flowers are used, to a continuous, life-long, heart-felt worship of God, where the entire current of life, whether good or bad, is dedicated to God or to the Guru without the least sense of egoism.

6. *Namaskāra*

Closely akin to Arcana is the kind of devotion expressed by Namaskāra, that is bowing down or prostrating before God or God-like persons, without any thought or hesitation. If egoism is to be avoided, it must be replaced by its opposite quality, namely, humility : and the best way to express and cultivate this spiritual quality is physically or mentally to bow down one's head with reverence to God. It is the easiest way in which our sins will be forgiven by God and His grace will descend on us. It is the epitome of all spiritual virtues, *viz.*, non-egoism, humility, dedication, worship, surrender, and the waiting with hope and faith for the grace of God. How can God neglect His devotee who submits his will in utter humility? Assuredly, he is lifted into the kingdom of God.

7. *Dāsya*

Next comes Dāsya or the service of God. In spite of the identity between the soul and God, the devotee should always consider that he is one of the humblest servants of God. He, should undertake to do anything, which would ordinarily be below his dignity, or unbecoming to his social position, but which, when done, will enhance the cause of God-realization. He should not mind even cleaning the precincts of the temple of God, and if need be, render physical service to those who love God. For service given to the people of God is really service given to God. It does not, however, include the service that is rendered to Godless humanity, though from the social point of view, it may be the highest service. The service which is done by building schools, hospitals and sanatoriums, may be the highest social and moral service, but is in no way a spiritual service, unless it turns the people who receive it towards God.

8. *Sakhyatva*

Sakhyatva or Friendship of God is a type of devotion which is most difficult to practise. It is possible only for an advanced Sādhaka, and presupposes in him great insight, faith and sincerity. It is the confluence of the devotion of man and the grace of God; it is at once the test of devotion and almost the culmination of it; and it brings about the reconciliation of the sense of creaturehood and dependence inevitable in a devotee with that of equality and friendship. Though there is the perpetual surrender of his will to the will of God, and though there may arise occasions when he has to give up his personal convenience, pleasures, relations and everything, including even his life, the true devotee will never consider it as a price too high for the friendship of God. The ordinary human friendship depends on barter, on a sort of give-and-take, on compromise; the Friendship of God can arise only out of an uncompromising determination to lose all, if need be. Men who profess their friendship most may desert us in our crises and perplexities: God, who appears to be indifferent to us in spite of our sacrifices, is really never so. He simply 'watches our little courage with kindness,' as Rāmadāsa says, and is verily a 'protective adamant' to us, if we simply try to seek his love by always succumbing without any complaint to his will.

It may appear in the beginning that God does not reciprocate his love, that his will is adverse to our will, and that in spite of our devotion and our expectation that he would help us, he leaves us uncared for and disappointed. This is a sufficient reason for an impatient devotee to become angry with God, to grow sick of him, and even to hate him. So, the utmost caution and courage are required in not allowing ourselves to turn down our spiritual life in despair, simply because our petty desires are not fulfilled. To win the love of God is no joke. People vainly call God the author of all things and activities; they do not believe it from the bottom of their heart. A true devotee, on the other hand, should always remember that the friendship of God will never break, and that his grace will never diminish; and if he suffers disappointment and difficulties, he should suffer them calmly and courageously in the Name of God, thinking that God wished it all. Suffering and disappointment are a necessary, integral part of the spiritual life. Without them spiritual life is not tested. As Rāmadāsa says, 'Rāma tests the quality of the mind of those who meditate upon his Name.' Till this test is made, and the devotee stands it, the spiritual life is bound to appear as a one-sided life, proceeding from the devotee to God, and not from God to the devotee in return. The devotee works; but God appears to be indifferent, as he does not send his grace. The Chātaka bird waits upon the cloud; the cloud may not send drops into its beak. Will the bird give up its longing for the cloud? A true devotee too must ever be prepared to stand the test of God, meditating all the while on him and asking for his grace to enable him to stand it. To meet such a devotee God too will be impatient; and the anxious waiting of the devotee and his sufferings will be infinitely repaid by the kind touch of God.

Unlike human friendship, the key to achieve the friendship of God is with the devotee alone; so it rests finally with him whether God should be his friend or not. God being the innermost reality, nearer to one than one's own heart and breath, He can never be deceived just as human friends are by outward smiles. Even the slightest change of heart is known to God, and so there arises the corresponding change in him. If the devotee fails in his attitude of faith and love, even by the slightest degree, God, too, in that very moment, goes away considerably from his devotee. God is, as it were, the faithful echo or image of the devotee. He smiles if the devotee smiles; he becomes angry if the devotee is angry; and he is faithful if the devotee is faithful. Knowing this, and knowing that God is fully aware of even the most secret thoughts, the devotee should communicate all his thoughts, whether good, bad or wicked, to God without any sense of reserve or shame. The devotee should be truthful at least while speaking to God and his Guru. He need not fear either of them or be shameful; for nothing should intervene between a disciple and his Guru, or between a devotee and

God. With utmost confidence and truthfulness, and with loving reliance and sincerity, the devotee must try to bind himself with God. God will then appear as greater than mother, father, brother, friend or any other person whom we can consider as a loving and helping hand. If at all a name is wanted, we may call Him by any name—Mother, Father or Friend.

9. *Ātma-Nivedana*

Ātma-Nivedana comes last as the crowning phase of the devotional life. It consists in the utter annihilation of the sense of egoism and bodily consciousness, as if by cutting off one's own head at the feet of God. It is the silent experience of the unitive life, of which no word can give any account. The surrender of the self to God is so complete, that the sense of separateness is lost, and there reigns the single unutterable blissful kingdom of the Ātman.

A philosophical approach by way of thought is, no doubt, possible; but it is rather theoretical than practical. It is also hazardous and full of dangers, and so may be recommended as simply a help-mate to the surest royal road of devotion. Rāma-Bhajana, as Rāmadāsa tells us, leads us to the knowledge of the Ātman, and thus, to the 'apprehension of everything else as illusion. The whole perceptible universe vanishes as a dream before the eyes of one who has realized the Ātman.' As opposed to this devotional way of realizing the Real, there exists, as Rāmadāsa tells us, the philosophical way of thought and imagination which makes us temporarily feel the presence of the Real and the abiding Ātman. The philosophical way, therefore, though useful to some extent, appears to us as incomparably low or even as a questionable means of attaining this peak of spiritual knowledge.

Philosophically considered, Ātma-Nivedana is possible in the following manner. If one begins to answer the question, 'Who am I?' he will first eliminate the five elements, *viz.*, the earth, the water, the fire, the wind and the sky, because they constitute his 'body' only. He will say to himself that he is not the material self. Then he will in a similar manner eliminate successively his mind, intellect and egoism, as not constituting his 'I.' In this negative way, he will fall back on the Brahman, the Ātman or God as the only support and essence of this 'I.' He will however be convinced of this only intellectually, and will not have any experience of it on that account. Rāmadāsa gives us a very powerful argument as to why the mere intellectualist can only understand the meaning of Ātma-Nivedana without realizing the Ātman, and that too, if he can avoid the deep pitfalls on the way, as pointed out to us by a real seer. In the first place, the material self, as constituted out of Avidyā (*i.e.*, containing in it no element of knowledge), has no other option but to construe the entire perceptible world as real, because the perceptible world, too, is constituted out of Avidyā. The conviction that 'I am the body and the mind,' is paired off by another relevant conviction that 'the perceptible world is the real world.' Avidyā has seen the like of her and has believed in it. But this is no seeing and believing in the opinion of one who is able to cross the Avidyā or the ignorance. The conviction that the perceptible world is the only reality has become itself a stumbling block in the way of realization. Intellect soon learns that mere perceptibility is not the criterion of reality and that sages and seers were not fools to give their verdict against the perceptible world. A person therefore comes to believe, in the second place, in an imperceptible world on the ground that the perceptible world is not abiding, and that it changes from moment to moment. On the one hand, there is now the intellectual conviction that the perceptible world is unreal; but on the other hand, there is not the experience of God or the Ātman. Therefore the intellect now falls into another pitfall, *viz.*, the 'void'. It is the vacant Absolute with which, sometimes, a mere intellectualist identifies himself and derives a sort of imaginative pleasure in doing so. As a matter of fact, such a person is simply an idler under the guise of the knower of the Brahman. He vainly feels the presence of the Brahman in him; it is nothing but the feeling of bodily and mental well-being. The same demon of bodily consciousness or Ahaṁkāra appears in the new form of his having identified himself with the Brahman. If it is not any object of the perceptible world as the object of consciousness, and if, at the same time, the knower has the feeling of having identified himself with something which he calls the Brahman, then surely, it is not the realization of the Brahman or the Ātman, but of the void or nothingness. The experience of the Ātman or the Brahman means that the subject becomes the Ātman or the Brahman; it is only by the process of becoming that the Ātman can know the Ātman. The void, on the other hand, though it causes the illusion of mistaking the servant for the king, remains distinct as an object from the subject. The void or nothingness (Śūnyatva) is then another great obstacle which must be overcome before one can expect to have the Ātmanic knowledge.

The perceptible world and the ocean of nothingness having been overcome, the intellect has yet to grapple with a formidable hindrance on the way to Brahman. Prakṛti or Māyā or the whole of the changing world appears as an objective reality, on account of kalpanā *i.e.* Vṛtti or imagination. The world of change is said to be composed of eight parts, *viz.*, the five elements and the three qualities (Guṇas), and is ultimately born in its subtlest form of Ahaṁkāra in the non-changing eternal Brahman. So, the Prakṛti or the Māyā, or the world of change, is nothing but a ripple of consciousness of 'I am,' on the still waters of the Brahman. Now this Vṛtti or Kalpanā or Sphurtirūpa Ahaṁkāra, that is, the egoism which arises as an inspiration in the quality-less (Nirguṇa) Brahman, in the form of 'I am alone; let me be many', is what is known as Mula-Māyā. With reference to consciousness, ignorance, and the mixture of the two, the same is known as Guṇa-Māyā; and the two together Mula-Māyā and Guṇa-Māyā in their gross form of the material, perceptible, changing world is known as Cancala Māyā or simply Avidyā. And again, that element of consciousness which is universally present in all beings, and is the cause of all the activities of sense and the sensible world, is supposed by the intellectualists to be the Seer, the Spectator or the Intelligent Being, and is worshipped in a philosophical manner by these so-called 'wise' among men. This is, however, a more fashionable way of the philosophers themselves of missing God than the two which they condemn, *viz.*, worshipping idols and incarnations. The unchanging Brahman remains as ever unchanged, and no element of the world of change can ever be compared with that which does not change. To realize therefore the unchanging God is once again impossible for the intellect of the changing world. The way of realization lies elsewhere.

In spite of her defeat, however, the intellect has been useful in pointing out to us the giddy heights of Ātma-Nivedana. In two more ways, let us try to have an intellectual approach to the same. Viveka-Pralaya, or the intellectual dissolution of the constituents of the changing world, is one of them. It consists in imagining that the effect merges or is dissolved in its cause. The earth, for example, if imagined to be burnt into a small heap of ashes, will be further imagined to be dissolved in water. Water in its turn can be imagined to be dried up by subterranean and terrestrial fires, as also by the Sun and the lightning. The fire in its turn is imagined to be extinguished by wind; and the wind, being but a small breeze in the infinite space, will be blown away into nothing. When this breath of consciousness too does not exist as a separate entity, there remains no trace of the entire changing world, including the self (as the principle of consciousness). With the vanishing of imagination as the cause of the phenomenal world, and of the phenomenal self, of Prakṛti and of Puruṣa, there remains either the void or the eternal Puruṣa, for the imagination to fall back upon. The idea of the void must be brushed aside, if, as seen above, we are to avoid a pitfall. The Ātman is now the only resting place of the intellect and the imagination.

In yet another way, the intellect and the imagination come perilously close to Ātma-Nivedana. Just as the human span of life is nothing when compared with the life-time of a nation; the life of a nation is nothing when compared with that of the earth; the geological, nothing before the astronomical; or again, just as when we begin to measure distance in terms of light-years, we shall find that the space occupied by the earth, as Sir James Jeans says, will hardly be equal to that of a needle-head: even so, if we begin to imagine ourselves as larger and larger than the universe, the latter will appear as smaller and smaller; say first, as a cricket ball, then as an apple, and then again as mustard seed. This dimension too the universe will soon lose, and it will be as good as non-existent, if we continue to imagine ourselves as larger and larger still. But the moment the universe will vanish, we too will vanish, so far as our consciousness of ourselves as separated from the universe is concerned. The imagination or the Vṛtti will itself be torn into pieces in the attempt to approximate to the dimensions of the Infinite, like the frog which burst its belly and died in its attempt to become as big as the bull.

The absence of any Vṛtti does not however mean that we have attained Nivṛttipada, or Unmani-Avasthā, *i.e.* the super-consciousness, or the supramental state where the subject-object relation does not enter. This state of the unitive life with the Ātman is a positive life. The state of mind produced by Viveka-Pralaya, *i.e.*, by the expansion of Vṛtti to such an extent that it ceases to exist, is a negative one. On no account the negative life, which is once again the void or nothingness, can be a substitute for the positive life of Ātma-Nivedana. By no stretch of imagination or intellectual trick can we live that life. Intellect and imagination will only give us a philosophical justification of that life by successively negativing the reality of the perceptible world, of the void, of the phenomenal world of change, and of a mental state from which Vṛtti has been driven out. The only way to Ātma-Nivedana lies through ceaseless devotion, meditation, spiritual experience and the grace of God.

So far, in our discussion of Ātma-Nivedana, we have seen that the bodily consciousness and Ahaṁkāra are the two inveterate foes that must be killed before we can expect to have the joy of unitive life. Otherwise there would be the egoism or the void. Meditation on the Name of God is the only way to escape through the two horns of the dilemma and reach God, and through Him the God-head, as Eckhart would put it. 'Test it by your own experience,' says Rāmadāsa, 'that the waters of the Ganges of Meditation purify the world of Change.' As observed already while discussing Śravaṇa-Bhakti, the Name is the symbol of God, and if meditated upon properly, will be able to manifest God. On the one hand, meditation and Bhajana are antidotes against the bodily consciousness; on the other, they bring home to a devotee the conviction that when the egoism is excluded, there is nothing but God inside and outside. To meditate truly on the Name, as we shall see after a while, is to establish the identity between the meditator and the Name that is meditated upon; and this can be achieved only by listening or attending with great care to the meaning of the Name when it is uttered or remembered. There will arise such a perfect coalescence of the meditator and the symbol of God, that it is but one step further to say that in moments of ecstasy and joy, the devotee will forget the consciousness of his body and surroundings, and will be one with the immaculate form of God. When the consciousness of the body and of the surrounding objects ceases to be, the sage does not fall in a vacant Nothing, but is rapt up with Divine consciousness. When this Divine consciousness becomes intense and endures for a considerable length of time, God does not appear as a being other than the devotee, but as one, constant, immaculate Form which is at once the essence of God and the Self. The devotee, in the process of his meditation, sacrifices, one after another, his material, social and psychical self. He is automatically driven away from the consciousness or Ahaṁkāra of body, mind, and intellect. In other words, irresistibly and naturally, he so surrenders his self to God by the power of his meditation, that he becomes one (Ananya, *i.e.*, non-other) with God. The non-dualistic, advaitic doctrine of the Vedānta, becomes for the devotee a practical life. Of course, it admits of degrees; consequently, Ātma-Nivedana, too, is a process which admits of approximation.

We may put this point in a different way as Rāmadāsa has done it. There are, says Rāmadāsa, two kinds of Kalpanā or Imagination, or ideas, pure and impure. An idea or thought can always be expressed by means of words. The name of God, from this point of view, is nothing but a word, which stands as a symbol or vehicle for one thought or for one idea. Now, that idea or Kalpanā is said to be pure which is about God; and that impure, which is about any other object but God. If the pure Kalpanā gathers strength, then naturally the impure ideas fall away. The mind cannot hold them together for a long time. Gradually either the Divine or the non-Divine ideas must be shut out. If the devotee is well fixed in the meditation of the one pure idea about God, then gradually he will turn his back on other impure ideas, which remind him of objects other than God. Dualism thus dwindles and the advaitic experience dawns on him.

9

Methodology of Meditation

FOR A BEGINNER meditation on the same Name of God might naturally be felt as a dull and tedious process. In every other pursuit or affair of life there is some sort of change or variation. Here, there is the monotonous uttering of the same word. And, if as the saints tell, it should, in course of time, be meditated upon for hours together without any respite, one becomes aghast with fear and is overcome by diffidence even at the beginning of his spiritual career. But this is no fault of his. The senses of acquiring knowledge are opened on the outside world; the motor organs are impatient to be active; the infinite desires, which have made the senses, the mind and the intellect as their most secure home, are ever restive for being fulfilled and refuse to be driven out; and finally, the egoism of man takes so great a pleasure in identifying itself with all these activities without being tired, that hardly would anybody get even breathing time to think about something which does not fall within the range of his senses and intellect. Naturally, when he is introduced to an altogether new life and is asked to meditate on the Name of God, he feels he is in strange water, and his whole Prakṛti which is mainly physiological and mental, rises in revolt against his new enterprize. Not minding this however the novice has to put in great efforts to do the up-hill task of meditation; and then, in course of time, he will find to his great surprise and joy that the very alien forces of Prakṛti have become friendly and are lending him their support and help for carrying on his spiritual activities.

First of all, let the beginner make a firm resolve to sit for meditation daily, for a fixed period of time and at fixed hours as would be convenient to him. Whatever time he has at his disposal, let him fix for meditation that only and not encroach upon the hours of his duty or of his essential domestic and social engagements. But, correspondingly, he must also take utmost precaution to see that not a single worry regarding his duties or engagements encroaches upon his meditation. As the Name of God as imparted by the Guru, that is by one who has already realized God, is the holiest and the most purifying of all, it can be meditated upon any hour of the day or night. Even the most inauspicious time should be considered as the most auspicious, if the Name of God is to be uttered at that time. That place too where it is meditated upon becomes as holy as that of a pilgrimage. Therefore, one who seriously wishes to meet God need not go anywhere outside his house to search for a proper place for meditation, if he gets a room or a secluded corner in his house where he can meditate silently and undisturbed by anything else in the world. Incidentally, it will be very nice for the beginner that he should meditate without letting anybody know about it. Like a miser who counts his money or adds to it secretly, let him also count the divine Name by means of the beads of a rosary or by means of the breaths with which he might coalesce it.

If however he were to find that the house is not a suitable place for meditation, let him then go beyond the outskirts of the town, and choose a place which is solitary but free from fear or disturbance of any kind. If that place is known to be frequented by wild beasts or by robbers, or a place where serpents, scorpions, rats or other pests are found in plenty, then it should be immediately avoided. There is no sense in courting dangers, just as there is none in inviting the ridicule of the mischievous people by unnecessarily advertising that one is meditating on the Name of God. The place for meditation should be free from shrill sounds of birds and strong odours; for these will definitely distract the mind from meditation. The hubbub of the city, the factories and the market-places, the roaring of the sea, and the fierce blowing of the wind are such disturbances as will make even the beginning of meditation almost impossible. The place should therefore afford a good shelter for the body; for, if the meditation is to be carried on with increasing joy and peace, the body must be protected from the excesses of heat and cold. If it is a lonely temple or a cave associated with the name of a saint who had practised his meditation there, it should be chosen by all means. The aspirant alone will come to know that the place being sanctified is of immense help to him in doing his meditation. What he should do is to retire to that place regularly and punctually every day, remembering all the while, that if punctuality and regularity are necessary in everyday affairs, in doing one's duty and in attending social functions and state ceremonies, they are all the more necessary in paying one's homage and allegiance to the Maker of the universe, whether it be in that place or in the assembly of the Saints. If to go late or to remain absent without permission is an offence and an insult of the official of the state, will it not be a sin and an insult to the Almighty God to keep him waiting by either being late or by not being present at all at the appointed place for offering one's prayer and devotional meditation? What this would mean is to close the doors against the grace of God, and yet wish to have it without being loyal to Him! What is true with reference to God is equally true with reference to a saint or an assembly of saints. One should take utmost care neither to offend his spiritual teacher nor any other saint.

As we have said above, any time is good for meditation, no doubt. But it is better to meditate when both the body and mind are fresh and energetic. Taking a clue from the lives of Bhausahib Maharaja and Amburao Maharaja, the two great saints of Umadi and Inchgiri respectively (in the district of Bijapur of the Mysore State), we can say in a general way that a period of three to four hours before sunrise and about two to three hours after sunset, is the best time for meditation. After a sound sleep for four to five hours during night, both the body and mind are quite fresh and energetic. This presupposes no doubt that the stomach is not heavily loaded before going to bed. The cool and the refreshing atmosphere, the silent and the peaceful surrounding, the calm and the undisturbed state of the mind and an unfatigued body, and the time when the animate and the inanimate world outside is sleeping without making any disturbing sound, are the ideal conditions for anyone to meditate. Of course, in the case of very advanced sādhakas and great saints who are almost all the while God-intoxicated and who therefore can never be said to remain without doing meditation, this general advice need not apply at all. But it must always be remembered that the great saints could not have become great without having first undergone far more rigorous discipline than the one we have suggested. As a matter of fact, for one who is not satisfied with a sort of lukewarm spiritual life, but wishes to have it rapidly and as a full-blown growth, the morning meditation alone might not be sufficient. For, in the first place, it will be most difficult to devote three or four hours at a stretch in the morning meditation, unless the mind and body are trained for a very long time by other spiritual activities in the remaining hours of the day. And, secondly, if the good effects of meditation in the morning are not to be washed away or, are not to be counter-acted by all sorts of non-spiritual activities of the day, it is very necessary that there should be, after regular intervals of active work for a few hours, a few periods of meditation also, so that good results of the first meditation will be linked with the good results of the second meditation, those of the second with those of the third, and so on. And, thus, when throughout the day and night, the timings and the periods of meditation and of Bhajana and of reading spiritual literature and discussions, are fixed, there will hardly be left any time for cherishing any evil thought or for the doing of any unlawful or immoral act. The life as a whole will be spent either in doing one's duty, or in meditating on the Name of God, or we may say, in meditation and contemplation on the vision of God, even while one is doing one's duty.

The next important point about meditation is that it can be best done in a sitting posture only. For if one stands and meditates, attention will be divided in maintaining the balance of the body lest it might fall, and in the act of meditation, which then will not be intensive, prolonged and peaceful. The same would be the difficulty when the meditation is carried on while walking. And yet, it is very desirable for spiritual progress that one should remember God even while he is walking, eating, drinking or doing any other activity. For, that will keep the mind always in tune with the divine, though in a subdued manner. The undercurrent will always be spiritual, though on the surface there might be the ripples of duty or of some other social engagement. Any moment, then, it will be possible for the sādhaka to take a dip into deep meditation or come back again to the surface of the worldly life. Like a shuttle-cock it will then be easy for him to glide forward and backward from duties to meditation and vice versa. It will not be a jump from one to the other; for, his duties also will not then be anti-spiritual. They will be pro-spiritual or even tinged with spiritual flavour.

Posture or 'Āsana' is one of the eight parts of what is known generally as the Pātañjala-Yoga, and it has got several varieties with most of which we have nothing to do, so far as devotional meditation is concerned. Almost all of them are concerned in keeping the body strong, healthy and free from any disease. And we do admit that even for the most devotional, intensive and prolonged meditation, to possess a sound and healthy body ought to be considered as a very fortunate circumstance. And so, we mention here only two sitting postures which, besides being useful for keeping physical fitness, would also be highly useful for meditation. They are Padmāsana and Siddhāsana. The latter, though it has been much praised by the great saint, Jñāneśvara, and is called by him as Vajrāsana (a posture which will make a man as strong as adamant), is difficult to practise and involves an amount of risk also. So, we should be content with Padmāsana only. It is a sitting posture in which the two legs are bent at the knee and so cross each other as to enable one to place the hind portion of the right heel in the left groin (the depression between the abdomen and the thigh) and that of the left heel in the groin of the right leg. The body, the neck and the head are to be kept straight and erect so that, as the Bhagavadgītā tells us (6-11-13), there should be no bend in the spinal cord. The palms should be placed one over the other with the fingers bending upwards, between the two heels and touching the abdomen below the navel, or they should be placed on the respective knees with the fingers pressing them as much as one would like; or kept anywhere on the thighs without any discomfort. The mouth should be closed; the breathing slow and measured; and the eyes kept only half open, and directed at the tip of the nose.

How long should a man sit in this posture? And the reply is, as long as one would find it comfortable to do so. For, Patañjali himself has given us an excellent definition of 'āsana', namely, that it is one which has the two characteristics of being 'steady' and of bringing a 'sense of comfort.' In the beginning, for about a fortnight or so, one should sit in this posture for about ten to fifteen minutes or more, till he begins to feel uneasy. He should not, however, immediately give up the posture, but endure the discomfort or the painful condition for a minute or two, so that in course of time, he would cease to feel the discomfort and the minute or two would be added to his feeling of ease and comfort which he might derive from sitting in that āsana. Thus, he can get himself accustomed to sitting for longer periods of time, both with comfort and steadiness; and so, by the end of a couple of months, he would be able to sit for about forty-five minutes. This might be considered as a tolerably satisfactory unit of an undisturbed, peaceful meditation. After this, one may get out of the posture, and relax a little or read a passage or two from some spiritual literature, or sing a devotional song, and resume his exercise of meditation, till he completes his planned or intended period of meditation. Or, if he chooses, he might continue to meditate straightway even after the period of forty-five minutes, but need not be afraid if his feet and legs begin to feel the sensation of numbness. For with endurance and practice of meditation, that also will soon be overcome, and the meditation can be continued with fixity of attention on all the aspects of it for two or three hours, though there might be some changes in the position of the hands or of the legs, as would suit the meditation.

Sometimes there might occur a stomachache on account of the accumulation of the gases or excess of bile, but this also will subside when, due to deep meditation, a kind of sweet juice begins to ooze on the tongue and goes into the stomach. The eyes too might be fatigued on account of concentration on the tip of the nose. In that case, let the eyes be shut for some time, for the only precaution to be taken is not to strain too much any sense of knowledge or action, or any limb of the body beyond its capacity to bear. It should never be forgotten that even for the prolonged, intensive and absorbing meditation, both the body and the mind must feel comfort, peace, buoyancy and joy, and that notwithstanding what we have said regarding the posture and the sight, there is no hard and fast rule about them. Sit one can in any manner he likes and meditate on the Name of God with love and regard. But, now, the precaution to be taken is not to allow oneself to become sluggish, lethargic, and drowsy. Or else, under the guise of meditation, one might go into sleep by shutting his eyes, and by reclining his body gradually till it becomes flat on the ground. Nay, that way, one might learn to sleep and snore even while sitting. That is why one should get himself accustomed to the regular, rigorous discipline of sitting for meditation in the manner we have described above and get himself insured once for all against the possible pitfalls and defects of meditating in a leisurely and listless manner. A certain amount of asceticism and willingness to undergo hardship are necessary to make any headway in spiritual life. Then alone, as said in the beginning of the chapter, not only the mind but the body also would be eager to respond quickly and favourably whenever the soul would hunger for the joy and peace of devotional meditation. To that extent, Prakṛti will be found to have changed its obstructive nature and assumed the role of a friendly partner in the spiritual business of God-realization. The āsana, in short, will relieve you from sleep and slothfulness; the sight on the tip of the nose will increase your power of concentration, and enable you to see the vision of God clearly and steadily. The breathing will be slow, deep and rhythmical, and making the lungs and the heart clean and powerful, it will help you in mixing the Name of God along with it; and you would feel that at every breath you are taking the divine energy in you.

The condition of the mind of the meditator is equally important. No doubt, it is desirable that the mind should be free from cares, anxieties and fear at the time of meditation. For, how can a mind which is sullied by ugly thoughts and torn a hundred times by cares and fears meditate on God even for a minute? An initial effort to banish all Godless ideas from the mind and fill it with the Name of God is very necessary. And then, with the entry of God, if the devil is not turned out why should we meditate at all? Very rarely is a man perfectly pure at heart. Therefore one who begins to meditate, should do so with the faith that the grace of God will always be with him, that the Name of God has the power to bring in purity and calmness of mind, and that he should continue his meditation with courage and determination.

The method of meditation is one of the most important aspects of spiritual life. People in general meditate in a mechanical and artificial manner without their soul in it. This they can remedy by following certain well-known principles and modes of traditional practice of meditation. One must remember that he has to go beyond the five elements and yet not do without their help; to go beyond the three guṇas, and yet to depend on them; to go beyond intellect and egoism, and yet to make use of them. We have already seen, how the body and the mind can be of great help to the practice of meditation on account of the bodily posture and the mental condition. To a certain extent, we have also seen, how the organs of sense, for instance, the eyesight, and the organs of actions, for instance, the hands, the feet, the spinal cord, the neck and the head, are useful in the act of meditation. Even so, we shall now further see how the Prakṛti as a whole, instead of conspiring against us as an alien force, will be most helpful to us in making our progress towards Godhead smooth and safe.

If meditation means the remembering of the Name of God as imparted by the spiritual teacher, it can be done in more than one way. It can be uttered loudly or slowly as a spoken word of mouth. If loudly, it will shut out all other sounds, and the Name will be audible for oneself and attended to with interest. But the tongue and the ear might soon get tired; the mind, will find it more difficult to attend. Besides, the loud utterance might be a nuisance to others; They might call it a useless and mechanical jargon, and the faith of the Sādhaka might dwindle. Instead, one may utter the Name very slowly and in a low tone, or utter it in his throat with a slight or no move ment of the tongue. This is, no doubt, a more difficult process, but with practice, it will give more joy and peace than what the first method would do. Here, the mind and the ear have to be more active in attending and listening to the Name that is being slowly and distinctly uttered in the throat in a measured and low tone. But in doing so, the mind loses much of its natural habit of flying away in a moment to other objects and thereby forget to utter the Name. With the mind and the ear being thus concentrated on the Name a peculiar sweet juice begins to ooze on the tongue, and the soul also becomes delighted and one with the mind and the Name. In the yogic terminology, the pit in the throat is called the 'Viśuddha cakra' that is the plexus which purifies the body and mind. If the divine energy in the form of juice goes into the stomach, it is no wonder that it should act as a purifying agent. This juice is called as 'Nectar', though to us it may appear as only physiological in nature. In fact, this is the experience of God as flavour.

The process of meditation will be immensely helped by the commonly accepted method since the time of the Upaniṣads. One is advised to remember the Name along with the ingoing and the outgoing breaths. There is no need of controlling and regulating the breaths in a fixed, proportionate, mechanical and artificial manner as is required to be done in the process known as 'Prāṇāyāma' in the Pātañjala Yoga. For, in the first place, nothing is so difficult and risky as the control of wind (Prāṇāyāma). Secondly, it does not contain any spiritual element in it; it is a physiological process which is highly useful in making the physical body, strong, clean and free from disease. But, this can be achieved with equal success by mixing the Name with the breaths; for, the attention given to the remembering of the Name along with the breaths does bring in, without our knowing, a sort of automatic control over our breathing. It becomes slow, rhythmical, proportionate, soft and pleasant. The Name too, will be felt as being swung upward and downward along with the swing of the wind, as it were; and thus the Sādhaka will very skilfully combine both the processes of Yoga and devotion, that is, of having control over the breaths and of meditating on the Name of God. And, in course of time, as attention and interest in the repetition of the Name would increase, the breaths also would be more slow, more proportionate and rhythmical, and last for more time than before. This is controlling enough, and it occurs by itself and without any effort.

Further, again, as the divine energy begins to manifest in the form of various spiritual experiences, such as auditions, visions, etc., and as the mind becomes stunned with amazement, there comes about of its own accord, a short suspension of breath, as it does occur even in ordinary life when something unusual is suddenly seen or heard. We may call this state of suspension of breaths as the 'Sahaja Kumbhaka' of the devotional kind, meaning thereby the natural control over breathing in such a way that both the processes of inhaling and exhaling of air stop for a while. This corresponds to the artificial 'Kumbhaka' of the Yogic Prāṇāyāma. Thus, it is that we shall achieve control over wind as also all the benefits of Prāṇāyāma, and avoid all its risks and dangers by combining the Name with the wind. Curiously enough, the Yoga too holds that there is the identity of mind and the wind (Pavana); and so, a control over either of them means a control over the other. Let the mind therefore learn to meditate along with the breaths, so that with the steadying influence of the breaths, the mind too will become steady. But as the attention, interest, love and regard for the Name will increase, and as, by the grace of God, the aspirant will be fortunate to have some or other kind of spiritual experience, the mind will be almost completely steady, and the aspirant will be conscious only of the Name and Forms of God, and not so much of the breaths which certainly will be there as the support of life. One should, however, be grateful to the breaths or the Wind (Prāna-Vāyu, i.e. Pavana or Marut) who, as a faithful servant of God carries the mind of the aspirant at once beyond the two stages of meditation, namely, that of uttering the Name as the spoken word of the mouth, and that of muttering it inarticulately in the throat, and enables him to meditate upon it silently by the mind. The breaths are the natural rosary, the gift of God, which the aspirant can use whenever he likes without being tired soon, just as he would become by counting the beads of a man-made rosary. St. Ekanātha ridicules the idea of measuring by means of beads that Great Being who is immeasurable in every respect. What he however means is that the spiritual quest has no end.

However, notwithstanding the fact that the method of meditation by means of counting the beads is somewhat mechanical, it should by all means be resorted to when the mind becomes dull, or when one feels too weak on account of some illness, or physical incapacity to sit for meditation. There may be a person, who, by holding a rosary in his hand, might pretend that he is full of devotion, and count the beads occasionally only as a show. Or, there may be another who is really unable to sit for meditation and yet not take a rosary for the fear that others might criticise and ridicule him. One should, no doubt, guard against such possibilities, and meditate by means of a rosary without letting as far as possible any one else to know about it. The rosary is significantly known as the 'Smaraṇī',[1] for it enables one to remember the Name of God, as soon as one touches a bead. For a novice, especially, it acts as a good companion, since it keeps him awake in his meditations by making him aware that he is sleepy, the moment he stops counting or when the rosary falls from his hand. Especially, when certain spiritual passages are being read out, and when the mind becomes unable to attend them closely, the rosary can be used with great advantage, since it can supply him with another object for his divided mind to attend, namely, the meditation on the Name. The rosary thus keeps the balance of the mind by allowing its attention to tilt a little either on the side of the meditation or on that of listening to the spiritual passages. It will then normally be very difficult for the mind to give up both these activities, and fly with interest or attention to some other third object, unless it attracts the attention by its being overwhelmingly beautiful, sudden, frightful or unique in some way or other. In short, the rosary keeps the mind engaged either with the primary spiritual object of meditation or the secondary one of attending and understanding the passages that are being read out. The situation does not fundamentally alter, when one gives up the rosary of the beads and resorts to the rosary of the breaths. Either way, the spiritual activity is necessarily enhanced.

Whether it is the rosary of the beads or the rosary of the breaths, one should not unnecessarily worry over the question if he should repeat the Name once or twice or more along with one inhaling or exhaling of air, or with the counting of one bead. What is more important in meditation than the number of the repetitions of the Name, is the quality and the intensity of the surrender, the faith, the attachment, the love and the regard with which the Name is repeated. If the Name is small, that is, if it consists of only one or two or three letters, it can be repeated more than once in one breath; but if it consists of a large number of alphabet, the utterance of it might not be finished in one breath only. Sometime, a portion of the breath might not be used by the Name; sometime, the breath might be too short for it. Hardly, will it be that the breath and the Name are co-extensive in length. But this need not cause any irritation; for, after all the wind is to be used only as a vehicle. To be aware of the wind is only a means; to be aware of the Name is the end. So, what one should mind is to take the help of the wind as much as it is possible and necessary but be attentive more and more the Name, and in course of time attend to the Name only. This is equally applicable to the rosary of the beads. One should repeat the Name once or twice as it suits him and then count a bead.

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[1] From Sanskrit root 'Smṛ' to remember.

This will automatically lead the soul to the third stage of meditation which goes on in a region much below the throat, and is therefore purely mental in character. So long as the Name was uttered in the throat, it depended for its being uttered to some extent at least on the muscular movements of the tongue and of the throat, and therefore the mind too had to struggle a little to attend to it with interest and joy. But when the mind itself begins to utter the Name silently in the region of the heart, and itself listens to it, it has not to struggle at all, since it can attend to its own two activities simultaneously. In fact, it is not the uttering of the Name but only the remembering or the recalling of it, which, in that it is consciously done, constitutes the hearing of it also. The recalling and the hearing of the Name are but two aspects of one and the same indivisible process of identifying the mind with the Name. This is exactly the process which is involved in the silent and mental reading of any book. We read a sentence by simply moving our eyes over it; and in attending to it mentally we understand the meaning of it simultaneously as we read it. In a way, we are naturally and unknowingly identifying ourselves not with the words that we see and read, but with the meaning which our mind and intellect grasp. Even so, when the mind remembers the Name, or we may say, reads it, as if it is a written word, it becomes identical with the meaning of it, namely, God himself. And so, it is exactly here that God or the divine energy, instead of remaining abstract or unknown and unknowable, becomes manifest in some form or other, whereby the devotee becomes convinced that the Name is not an idle something, but is potent and pregnant with God. It is not in vain that in the Yogic terminology, the region of the heart is called the 'Anāhata Cakra', that is, the plexus where the unstruck divine sound is heard. It is this sound or divine energy which takes various forms, such as the jingling of the bells, the beating of the drums, the humming of the bees, the roaring of the lion or of the thunder, and the melodious notes of musical instruments, of which the saints in India have spoken so eloquently, and of which, perhaps, Milton and Tennyson were aware.

That the mind should lose much of its unsteadiness and become one with the flavour and the sound as the manifestations of God, and enjoy the calm, the serenity, the joy and the peace arising out of them, constitutes the further surrender on the part of the eightfold Prakṛti. With this comes also the forgetfulness to some extent and for the time being at least of the condition of the body, and of the good or bad circumstances in which one finds himself. This is no surrender in the sense of the suppression of the mind and its desires, as the New Psychologists and the Psychoanalysts are fond of saying; it is its surrender in the sense of being offered as an oblation in the fire of sacrifice, of being merged and identified with the divine energy, as the river becomes one with the ocean. For the time being at least, the mind ceases to be mind and becomes as large as the Supermind, as the river ceases to be river and becomes as large as the ocean. It is the death of a tiny individual for the sake of partaking in the life of the Individual of the individuals, by the gradual process of realizing that the so-called mind is really the soul or the self, that the self is really the Ātman or God, and that God is nothing but the Brahman or the Absolute. The river runs into the sea only once; but the mind and self must get themselves merged into the Ātman or the Brahman at different times in a day; and this must continue for years and throughout the life, before it can be said that the self has become the Brahman.

As the power of the grace of God is unfathomable, it will be arbitrary to say that when the meditation comes to the stage of being done mentally, sounds and music will be the first spiritual experiences. As lightning precedes the thunder in the physical world even so in the spiritual world, light, colour, and even forms of the visions of God might precede them. One might have even the vision of the Self or the Ātman, that is of one's own form which is immanent in the whole of the body. When however meditation is being done from a still deeper region, namely, 'the Svādhiṣṭhāna Cakra' which is said to be located in the neighbourhood of the navel, the Name can be said to spring up from the Self itself. Like the great saint Kabīra, one gets the direct experience of the Name of God coming up spontaneously from within, and as sending its vibrations through all the plexuses of the spinal cord, upto the 'Sahasrāra Cakra' (the thousand petalled lotus) in the brain. It is at this stage that the self or the Ātman sees the Ātman and hears the Ātman and plays with the Ātman, and enjoys the supreme joy and peace of being one with itself. The meditator, the object of meditation, and the meditation, all merge in one unspeakable, unique experience of bliss and calm. One step further, and he sees the Self everywhere, and on all sides of himself. That which was immanent has become transcendent also. But as there is nothing else but the Ātman, the very distinction between immanence and transcendence drops down, and there emerges the ineffable condition of the Ānanda of the Brahman.

To attain this state of oneness with God, the meditator should note the following points with profit. Of course, in doing so we are aware that we shall be traversing more or less the same ground once again. But our motive is to emphasize the important points in the discussion we have done so far. Firstly, the body must gradually be trained to overcome the discomfort and the aching due to the posture, and the Siddhāsana or Padmāsana maintained from three to four or even to six hours at a stretch. At the start, the body will be kept in a particular posture for only a quarter of an hour; and it may take a year or two or even more for the meditator to maintain the equilibrium with ease for a period of several hours. With the accomplishment of the Āsana, the meditator will gain a victory over the physical diseases and will get ample power to resist the temptations of the mind as well. While the body is steady on the Āsana, how long will the mind disturb him by evil thoughts? The body is not allowed to move to execute the evil thoughts into action; naturally, the mind too will be tired and lend itself to the meditation of God.

Secondly, the mind, as observed above, will lose much of its notorious activity in attending to an indefinite number of things one after another, inasmuch as along with the breaths it will be closely tied to the Name. If unawares, any thought other than God enters the mind, the meditator should not try to turn it out forcibly. For to try to forget an idea is to remember it all the more; and even if it is removed forcibly, it will return with greater force. So the best way to remove the evil thoughts is to coax the mind with some gentle suggestion in the form of a saying from a saint, and to utter the Name of God with force and concentration. The mind then, like a good faithful horse, will dismount the traitor and welcome its Master to ride it. The mind will thus be a slave in the hands of the meditator.

Thirdly, if there be a sufficient number of meditator-friends, who would assemble together for the purpose of meditation, then turn by turn, one of them should loudly read out passages from spiritual literature, and all the others should engage themselves in meditation. This method is highly efficacious in prolonging meditation, without the feeling of weariness or loneliness. For it is only in the spiritual company that the Sādhaka learns that he ought not to be jealous of another's progress, and that he gets all the encouragement and incentive for continuing the meditation. If he should feel tired or sleepy or indifferent, he will be immediately aware of the presence of others, especially of the spiritually elderly, and will be ashamed to run away from meditation. And even if he becomes too tired, or if it somehow becomes impossible for him to meditate further, there is the second best on which he can fall back for rest and comfort. He can attend to the spiritual passages that are being read out, and have recourse to Saguṇa-Bhakti in the meanwhile. After being relieved for a while he can again begin his meditation or Nirguṇa-Bhakti. It is infinitely better for the mind to fall back upon the Saguṇa-Bhakti than to entertain Godless thoughts. As Rāmadāsa says, "You will certainly attain to Nirguṇa on the strength of Saguṇa." If Nirguṇa meditation alone is impossible, let it then be supplemented by Saguṇa; and if meditation by one self alone is impossible, let it be done in the spiritual company.

Occasional songs sung in the praise and glory of God before or during meditation, as also Bhajana and Kīrtana performed to the accompaniment of musical instruments immediately before meditation, give very powerful suggestions to the mind and incline it Sādhanaward. Music can tune the mind to any sort of sentiment; if it tunes the mind to the Infinite, on account of its subject-matter and on account of its melody, rhythm and 'Rāga,' then it is one of the greatest allies of meditation. But if instead music serves the purpose of Godless 'Śṛngāra' that is, sex-instinct, it is the worst enemy of the Sādhaka. Similarly, Bhajana and Kīrtana are highly serviceable adjuncts to meditation. They enhance the intensity and the duration of meditation, on account of the spiritually useful suggestions given to the mind; but they will never be a substitute for meditation.

Regularity and moderation in diet, in sleep and other activities of the body, moderate satisfaction of the senses, and healthy condition of the body are further aids to meditation. There will be no good meditation, if the bowels are constipated, or if there be acute headache or other ailment, or if the natural appetites of the body, such as hunger and thirst, are not satisfied. To possess the company of the good and the holy, and to avoid that of the atheists, the agnostics, the erotic and the effiminate are also the necessary aids to the progress of spiritual life.

In the very process of advanced meditation, there are involved a number of aids, which we now mention and explain very briefly. By the advanced type of meditation we mean the meditation of an aspirant who has had spiritual experience in one form or another. The spiritual experience, which is the outcome of meditation, itself serves the purpose of continuing the meditation further still; and the entire psycho-physical apparatus also will be found highly useful for spiritual experience. If, for example, the meditator has the photic experience, it will help him in this way: his eye-sight will now have a double duty to perform. It will, as before that experience, have its direction towards the tip of the nose; but now the direction of the eye-sight will be guaranteed, not by the physical object, *viz.*, the tip of the nose, but by the spiritual experience. The eye-sight now will be truly serving God. Similarly, if the meditator is fortunate enough to hear the mystic sound, his ears too will be doubly serving God; firstly, by listening to the Name of God which he himself mentally utters; and secondly, by listening to the Anāhata (unstruck) sound. Similarly, the tongue will be doubly engaged in uttering His Name and in tasting the sweetness of it, The nose will inhale and exhale the Name of God as it were, and experience the Divine perfume, never smelt before. The skin will enjoy the tremor, the sweat and the coolness as well as the touch of the immaculate form of God. The hands will count the beads of the rosary or be folded in salutation. The head will be bent with reverence and awe, and the mind will attend to all these activities and be overjoyed with the fulness of God. The body will be felt as light as a feather, and will offer no difficulty in making a mental prostration before God and the Guru without itself being moved. In short, in this advanced condition of meditation, the entire body, with all its organs of sense and action, and the mind will work in unison for the glory of God. It is thus that meditation results in spiritual experience, and spiritual experience helps meditation again.

There are other forms of meditation which should be resorted to temporarily and occasionally. To meditate on the Name of God by means of counting the beads of a rosary is one such form of meditation. When it becomes impossible for one, on account of weakness, dullness or physical incapacity to sit for meditation, one should by all means take a rosary and count the beads for either a particular length of time or a particular number of the rounds of the rosary. The process may seem somewhat mechanical, but is of very great value. Ekanātha ridicules the idea of measuring that which is immeasurable; but what he means is that the spiritual quest has no end. There may be in the fold of devotees a person who may pretend that he is full of devotion by simply holding a rosary in his hand, and occasionally counting the beads only as a show; or there may be a person who may not take a rosary for fear that others may criticise him as one who advertises to others his act of devotion. One must, no doubt, guard against these possible evils in taking to meditation by means of a rosary. If one would take care to utter the Name of God distinctly to one's mind, and then only count a bead, the rosary will be found to be doubly useful in producing, firstly, a sort of rhythm between the series of repetitions of the Name and the counting of the beads, and secondly, in doing away with the intrusion of other thoughts. The rosary of beads in the hand will soon produce a mental rosary of the repetitions of the Name which the devotee will be pleased to place round the neck of God. The rosary is significantly known by the name 'Smaraṇī', for it enables one to remember the Name of God, as soon as one touches a bead. It will act as a good companion who keeps the novice awake in his meditations. Without a rosary, the novice may unknowingly fall asleep and not know how long he has slept; with a rosary he will immediately become aware that he is sleepy the moment he stops counting, or the rosary falls from his hand. Especially when the spiritual passages are being read, the rosary is the best means of enabling the novice easily to divide his attention and apply it to meditation and the hearing of the passages. It will then be almost impossible for a Godless thought to enter into his mind; for he is already doing the non-spiritual act of counting the beads of the physical rosary. In the absence of the rosary, the novice may continue in his mind an independent train of ideas and defeat the very purpose of attending to the meaning of the spiritual passages. The rosary thus serves greatly in enhancing the spiritual activity of a novice.

Occasionally, the process of meditation can be varied in one more way. The Name is inwardly uttered so loudly, intensely and frequently that it resembles the crying out of a person who is waylaid by robbers for succour. God is conceived as being far off; and the devotee being impatient and helpless, and being unable to find anybody near at hand to save him, cries out inwardly and in rapid succession the Name of God. It is thus that the feelings of creaturehood and of dependence on God are heightened; and consequently, with each uttering of the Name, the dovotee makes a mental prostration before God. This process of ardently and impatiently crying out the Name of God cannot last for a long time; but if employed now and then, it will produce finer emotions and increase the sweetness of the Name, and the love and regard for it. To proclaim and sing the

Name of God from house-tops, without fear or shame, is also occasionally resorted to, either because the dovotee cannot remain satisfied without doing so, or because he wishes to drown in it the stress and storm of his physical and mental disturbances. It brings in the necessary relaxation of the body, and fills the mind with a new energy to go in for a silent meditation again. The loud uttering of the Name mentally or by speech in very close and rapid succession, and with sustained breath, is an excellent way of pounding and smashing out all God-less ideas of the mind. And so when all the anxieties and disturbances are over, the mind becomes pure and calm like still water, and the devotee sees in it the image of God.

Whatever may be the variations of meditation, all good and true meditation is on the Name of God alone, and on nothing else. When the devotee becomes so fortunate as to have a look at the Form of God, as a result of meditation, he does two things simultaneously; he looks at the Form and meditates on the Name. Then, very soon, he comes to have a love and regard for both the Form and the Name. No wonder then that the attraction of the Form and the sweetness of the Name should bind him indissolubly to his beloved, God.

10

Surrender, Prayer and Grace

A. Surrender

IT IS DIFFICULT to point out which of these three aspects of spiritual life is the cause of the other two. For one who surrenders naturally prays for mercy and grace; and a prayer which is heard and becomes fruitful makes a man more and more dependent on the mercy and grace of God. He comes to know like Abraham that he is nothing and that God is all-in-all. So, in course of time, he comes to know the power of God and learns to surrender his will to that of God. A third possibility and perhaps the real cause of both surrender and prayer, is the divine grace. For without the grace of God, which is generally invisible and therefore considered to be non-existent or superfluous, there can hardly be even the beginning of a genuine spiritual life. A merely traditional, mechanical and ritualistic way of uttering certain songs or praises to God has no doubt a disciplinary value and may in course of time culminate in producing a sort of devotional attitude; but in no case, it is either a spontaneous surrender or a heart-felt prayer of God. For these must arise out of a felt need for God, a felt vacuum in spite of plenty, a thirst, so to say, for knowing and feeling the Godhead.

But what may be the source of this thirst, when there are no compulsions of circumstances from outside? What might have been the reason for a Bhartṛhari or a Buddha to leave the Kingdom, or for a Rāmadāsa or Śankarācārya to renounce the world at a very tender age, and induce them to make the search for God, unless, as it seems to us, it happens to be a purpose of God, God selects his instrument, and however faulty, ungodly or unworthy it may be, it does the work of God, as He wants it to be done. It matters very little for God whether a man is poor or rich, or whether he is meritorious or sinful if he wishes to grace him and make him His instrument. This was how St. Paul was chosen though he was a sworn foe of the Christ, and how Nāmadeva was chosen, though he was a waylayer first. Their surrender and their prayers are due to the grace of God, and not the result of their own efforts.

Surrender, it might be thought, is too common a word to need any explanation. 'Surrender yourself, your armies and weapons', says a conqueror to a defeated hero. Surrendered are the entire possessions and belongings of a slave to his master. Even the most pious and virtuous man surrenders to a dacoit in order to save his life. But this is no surrender in the spiritual sense of the term. At best, it is a virtue out of necessity; a bargain, so to say; a sort of give and take in exchange for the protection of one's life, property, or reputation; and so, it becomes only a matter of chance as to who surrenders unto whom. Today, a defeated hero, but tomorrow a conqueror; today a slave, tomorrow a master; such also might be a new picture of surrender in place of the old. And what applies to the individuals, applies to communities and nations also. In all such cases, surrender is very often a temporary phase, a burden to be borne with quite a sickening patience, but only to be thrown aside when the proper opportunity would arise. A dormant antagonism and a wrathful irritation under the guise of outward contentment and smile are the signs of this type of surrender which is simply a mockery of sacrificing one's own genuine interest for the sake of the imposed interests of some one else.

Next, comes the surrender of the child who runs into the arms of his mother for being protected from some imminent danger. Though caused by fear, surrender of this type is not completely non-spiritual in nature; for it is motivated equally by the faith in the protective shield of the mother's love. Such is exactly the surrender of a theist, of one who believes in the immanence and transcendence of God and in the protection

He can give to a believer. The good point of this type of surrender is that the sense of dualism between God and the devotee makes room for the excellent qualities which are necessary to foster and maintain the devotional attitude unimpaired, namely, the feeling of dependence, and of 'Creature-consciousness', and the consequent emotional reactions of awe, reverence, and worship. But the basic defect of all theism as also of the mere intellectual Vedāntic monism without any corresponding experience of it is the ever-lasting cleavage between man and God, and between the 'I' and the 'Brahman'. If God is transcendent, man too necessarily becomes transcendent or falls separate from God, though He might be considered as being nearer to man than even his breath. Depending on the mother for his nourishment, growth and protection, the child continues to become more and more independent of her. The 'I' in man, meaning thereby, his assertiveness that he is an independent individuality of his own, a tiny centre of experience which refuses to be identical with any other centre of finite or Infinite experience, ever remains as a surd which is hardly distinguishable from what is found in ordinary people who might be even devoid of religious faith. At best, one may say that whereas the egoism of an irreligious person is gross and easily perceptible, that of a religious person is refined and hard to be detected. As a matter of fact, egoism which enters stealthily into one who is progressing morally or spiritually is more difficult to be got rid of than the egoism due to learning, wealth, health, bodily power or status in society. For, it is just possible that there will be persons who are more learned, more healthy and as endowed with more power and status compared with whom, the ordinary egoism is bound to vanish. But as there are no concrete and visible signs of one person being more moral or spiritual than another, every one is left to exaggerate his own excellence and be on that account more and more egoistic. Surrender to God being a spiritual virtue of highest value has therefore its deadliest enemy in egoism which is all the more dangerous in the ethico-spiritual field.

The 'I' even in the form of consciousness, namely, 'I am a great devotee of God', though covetable so far as the spiritual progress is concerned, would never like to surrender or get itself emptied on the altar of God just as Abraham did it by declaring, 'God, I am nothing; thou art all?' St. Paul also did the same, we think, when he called on the people to follow him because 'Christ lived in him.' Not that Paul and Christ merely lived together as partners of each other; Paul emptied himself, so that Christ-spirit may live in him, and that he should thereby be only an instrument of Christ in him. For Abraham and Paul, the use of 'I' was merely for the purpose of social inter-communication; it did not imply in any theistic fashion, a term to indicate a dualism between them and God. Remaining themselves as the greatest devotees of God and as the everlasting pillars of the Church, they have, we hold, crossed the traditional boundaries of Theism and therefore of philosophical dualism, and have become once for all the greatest mystics of the world.

It is the emptying of the total contents of the self or the 'I' even at the feet of the Personal God that constitutes the real surrender in the spiritual sense of the term. It is not simply a homage; it is allegiance complete in every respect. Whatever one does in body, speech and mind; whatever one possesses by way of wealth, power and status; and whatever is related to him by way of family and social ties, he makes use of them all for the service and glorification of the Lord. Like a river which runs into the sea, he pours all the wealth of his being, of what he is and what he has, as offerings in the one universal Being; and like the river he too loses his name and form, his tiny individuality, and becomes as large as the Absolute itself. His own victory in the limited space and time will be transformed into the 'Victory and glory to the Name of God.' He will live in God, and God will live in him.

This looks that there are as if still two entities, two terms to make the one common relation of love. No doubt this is true from the view-point of the process of the theistic worship and adoration which continues and must continue till the end of life. But what happens in this process of approximation to perfection is that the entry of the divine spirit in man becomes more and more as the surrender or the elimination of the false ego in him is on the increase. So, ultimately, there remains no trace of the consciousness of a separate centre of experience, apart from the divine consciousness. The 'I' being completely satisfied, there remains the consciousness and the will of God alone in the physical body of man. The best example of this complete surrender we get in the passing away of Jesus. The lingering echo of the egoistic consciousness first came forth in the form of a complaint against God when the Christ was raised on the cross; but the very next moment came forth the triumphant voice, 'Thy will be done.'

Where is now the element of fear which we admitted above as a necessary element in the religious consciousness engendered by the theistic piety all over the world? It is drowned; it has vanished in the ocean of love and joy of God-intoxication. Even the fear of the 'Numinous', the 'Mysterium Tremendum', of which Rudolf Otto speaks so truly and eloquently in his famous work, 'The Idea of the Holy', is transformed by the grace of God into ecstasy. In other words, the spirit of man does not die; it becomes transformed into the spirit of God. Hence, we can say, that notwithstanding the decay and death of the physical body of flesh and blood, the saint remains ever immortal. Not that he dies and then resurrects. He is already resurrected as God even while he lives, for the process of resurrection had begun in him long before his physical death, when he first practised the art of renunciation, of self-abnegation, of surrender and resignation to the will of God. It is this kind of surrender which constitutes, as Rāmadāsa says, the highest form of devotion known as Self-surrender (Ātmanivedana). It is unique in the sense that it makes participation in the divine nature, as not merely a reverential worship of a transcendent God, but as the very basis of the life of communion and unity between man and God. It is like the human wick feeding the flame of divine lamp by means of the oil of love, so that the wick and the oil together become one with the blazing flame. Then alone will the wick of man be able to shed the same light as that of God. Thus it is that the theistic devotion passes into mystical realization and yet continues to be the constant support of the latter, just as, the wick and the oil continue to maintain the flame of the lamp. Thus it is that man grows into divinity day by day and by degrees, and yet remains a devotee of God till the end of his life, just as the wick becomes the flame, and being constantly soaked in oil, is waiting to be consumed by the flame, bit by bit. This is the life-long sacrifice, known as the Jñāna yajña, as recommended by the Gītā and by all those who have realized God.

Who indeed can make such a lofty surrender of his entire being? Not certainly a weakling and a coward; not he who is vascillating, prudent and crafty; nor again one who being confronted by the unyielding will of God makes a show of surrender, and yet tries his best to push on his own will and efforts. It requires a courageous and a brave man to set his house on fire in order to build in its place the temple of God. Always does he keep the doors of his mind and heart open so that the grace of God may come in at any time and fill them with divine power, wisdom and will. But all this does not come in by mere wishful thinking; nor by a simple act of compliance. The type of surrender we have described so far has to be planted and cultivated by the combined forces of meditation, contemplation and prayer. We have dealt with the first two in the chapter on the Methodology of Meditation. We shall therefore turn our attention now to the consideration of prayer.

B. Prayer

Prayer is a word which has not only been wrongly interpreted, but also used to convey different shades of meaning. As we have already seen while discussing its relation with magic, it has nothing in common with the latter excepting a superficial resemblance. While the attitude of the magician is more often than not aggressive and assertive, that of the person who prays is pliant and submissive. The magician wants to usurp the supernatural power whereas the devotee wishes to have only the grace of God. The more the magician succeeds in his black art, the more arrogant and unscrupulous he becomes; the prayerful devotee of God, on the other hand, becomes more and more humble and content with whatever he gets.

Sometimes, mere songs of poetic beauty, fanciful description of landscapes, personification of natural phenomena, meaningless prophesies of soothsayers, sayings of bards, description of imaginary deities and of their choicest gifts, orchestral music combined with folk-dances, and even national anthems and pious wishful thinking about future prosperity, pass as prayers for our modern world. All this is entertainment only and falls outside the pale of spiritual prayer, the chief aim of which is to soften and fill one's mind with love and grace of God, so that it should also be filled with compassion for the miserable and ignorant.

Let us therefore be quite clear regarding the various kinds of prayer. They can be public or private, secular or spiritual, for oneself or for others, articulate or silent, routine or occasional, traditional or original, as also those which are combined or not with meditation and contemplation. They may be deliberately uttered with a view to invoke the grace of God before one begins to meditate, or come forth spontaneously out of gratitude and love due to the presence of the vision of God. Consequently they might be mixed with praises for the glorious deeds of the Lord, or they might simply be the expressions of prolonged plaintive cries over some calamities or some deep-rooted troubles, or the natural ejaculations of a God-intoxicated saint. Couched in poetic form and capable of being sung along with musical instruments, they might find their way in different lands and produce emotional reactions corresponding to the meaning of the words in the prayer, or they might be simple benedictions as indicating a good augury to the commencement of some important work. And they can be distinguished as being ceremonial, ritualistic, as referring to certain rites at the time of births, marriages, death and memorial services in honour of martyrs, dead warriors and other great men; or to a particular church, temple or faith. And finally, there might be prayers which can be distinguished as morning prayers, noon prayers and evening prayers and so on.

We have mentioned this long list of the kinds of prayer with the view to point out that we are concerned only with such prayers as will conduce to our spiritual well-being only. So, we shall first make a brief statement about some of the forms of prayer which erroneously pass as devotional in character, but which are in reality more or less the encrustations of a settled and traditional way of piety. Most of the public prayers, for instance, offered on the occasions of national crises, or on the anniversary ceremonies of joyful or mournful events are, no doubt, marked with great enthusiasm, warmth and gusto, and leave upon the minds of the participants an impression which is very healthy and desirable from the view-point of nourishing in them the sense of a patriotic, corporate life and of the well-being of it. But, in a general way, it can be said about such prayers that hardly do they touch the devotional fibre in the men and women who attend these prayers and turn their minds towards God. The motive is excellent, but the effect is not proportionate to the energy and the time spent in the performance. People utter the words or sing them mechanically in chorus, and are pleased with perhaps the melody and the rhythm of the tune and of the musical instruments, but are unmindful to the meaning of the prayers.

All this might be alright so far as the purpose is secular only. A battalion will march with ease and comfort for miles together even with the rhythm of the left and right steps which are taken in a measured way. A house-wife does her morning physical work joyfully while attending to the music of the 'Bhajanas' on the radio. But where the whole question is regarding how to turn the mind towards God, these mechanical contrivances are of a very limited use. Of course, this is being achieved to a far greater extent, when in a great and rich Hindu temple, for example, there goes on the worship of the deity, especially that part of it known as the 'Āratī' or the waving of light round the deity. The deity which is carved out of white marble is dressed and adorned beautifully with ornaments of gold and jewels, and with garlands of fresh and fragrant flowers; lights are kept burning and the sweet smell of the incense is spread everywhere. And then, the chanting of the hymns by the priests which constitute the prayers and praises of the Lord mix up so beautifully with the beating of the drums, the clapping of the hands and the ringing sounds of cymbals and bells, that it creates such a marvellous effect on the mind that one does feel that there is some supreme maker of the universe before whom one must bow down in reverence.

What might happen in course of time with some of these visitors is that they would form the habit of going daily to the temple and offer their prayers along with others. With them prayer becomes a ritual, a ceremonial way of pleasing the deity and with that a faith is created in their minds that the deity would listen to their prayers and fulfil their desires. So, first out of a longing to have their desires fulfilled, and then out of their greed for new and new desires, they begin to make several kinds of offerings to that deity. But, if unfortunately, their desires are not fulfilled, their original faith and feeling of dependence on the deity begin to dwindle, and they turn to other deities or embrace other faiths with the hope that they would find favour with them. No wonder that this grocer-like attitude of theirs would make their devotion skin-deep; their prayers, mercenary and mechanical; and their faith as having neither sincerity nor warmth. Add to this the priest-craft which is wantonly misleading for selfish gain, and there will be an end to all religious attitude. What will remain is only a nominal adherence to a particular form of worship and prayer.

Without going into further details of how even the most powerful prayers of the saints and sages become bereft of content and are reduced to mere hollow skeletons of words, when there is no strength of faith and warmth of love, we shall presently see the chief characteristic of a genuine spiritual prayer, so that one can find for himself the defects of all other forms of prayer. A spiritual prayer ought to be a natural call from within; a call not for possessing the power of God but for winning His grace. People who perform huge sacrifices and offer in the names of various deities all sorts of oblations in the sacrificial fire, who practise difficult yogic postures and breathing exercises, who render afflictions to the body and mind by undergoing fasts and penances, and who resort to the worshipping of various 'Yantras' or copper plates with diagrams and alphabet drawn on them and pray with appropriate 'mantras', might be endowed with supernatural powers; but impossible would it be for them to please God. These people do not understand that the power of God, even if it be available in the form of the ability to work out miracles, is as short-lived as any other objects of sensuous desires. The grace of God is a permanent possession, if they constantly pray for it by being attached to Him through ardent love, abiding faith and continuous meditation on the Divine Name.

There are some who say that prayer is not an indispensable part of religion. For a monistic Vedāntin for instance, it might be said that there being no difference between man and God, there would be no possibility of prayer at all. One may ask as to 'who should pray whom'?; that is when the 'I' or the individual soul becomes so completely merged as to vanish in God, there remains in fact none to pray. However, this is only an ideal condition, and one which lasts for a short time. Besides, it comes about only in rare persons who become thoroughly God-intoxicated. Such persons also will never say that prayer is not essential; for, they know that their own condition of being one with God is the result of a very, very long practice of faithful surrender, ardent and devout meditation on the Name of God, heart-felt prayers and absorbing contemplation on the divine Forms. Even the great Śaṅkarācārya, the prince among the Vedāntins, says in a famous verse, 'I belong to you, O Lord; how can I say that you belong to me? The wave belongs to the sea; how can the sea belong to the wave?' Is not this at once the expression of a very lofty surrender to God, and the admission in a prayerful tone that the greatest of the Advaita Vedāntins is but an humble devotee of the Lord?

As said above, and as has been discussed already, even the mystical height of enjoying the bliss of Brahman by being one with it, is nourished and maintained by the theistic attitude of prayerful worship of God. There still remains in this joyful union with God a sort of communion, which we might call, as the silent meditation and contemplation along with the prayerful desire of remaining in that very condition for a longer time. Prayer culminates in the adoration of the divine Form by means of gazing at it, and in singing praises unto Him by means of meditation on His Name. It expresses itself in the form of salutations to God again and over again, and in tears of love and gratitude for having received His grace in abundance. The silent placing of one's head at the feet of the Vision of God, as Arjuna did at the feet of the universal Vision (Viśvarūpa) which the Lord Kṛṣṇa had shown to him, is in spite of identity, the mystic's wonderful act of combining his surrender with his praises, worship and his prayer to God to forgive his faults and to grace him.

Prayer is one of the most essential elements in the spiritual life of a man on account of several reasons. It is an indication of the tacit acknowledgement of one's own finitude before an omnipotent, infinite Being; an awareness of utter dependence on God, and therefore as being the very support of a conscious and willing surrender unto Him in all respects. It not only makes a man humble and truthful with reference to God, but also makes him gentle, straightforward, accommodative and forgiving with reference to his fellow-beings, and especially with persons who are lower in status to him. When doubts and perplexities assail a man, as was in the case of Arjuna who could not know whether his duty was to kill his own kith and kin or to save their lives by himself retiring from the field of battle, the only wise and safe course is to surrender and pray to God to show him the correct and the wholesome way out of the predicament. Or, when one is too over-powered by the consciousness of guilt and sin to become calm and peaceful even after repeated thinking and repentance, there would be nothing so effective as an intense prayer to God to forgive him his faults and lapses and to save his soul. A mind which has thus become mellow by experience will hardly fail to seek the support of God to strengthen his will to lead a life of virtue and of service to humanity. And, finally, when one is firmly established in his moral life by leaning himself on the support of God, we are sure, he will of his own accord do the same in carrying on his spiritual activities also, especially of meditation and contemplation on the Name and Forms of God respectively. Hardly will he be proud of his own independent efforts at meditation and contemplation, and say to himself that man can rise to divinity without any prayer to God to lift him to that state. At no stage in the spiritual life, will there be any gain without an ardent prayer for having the grace of God which can never be measured in terms of wages for some service done to Him. Grace is a free gift from God, a sign of His pleasure; and God will be pleased only by means of devout meditation on His Name, and by the constant, prayerful attitude of submission and dedication to Him of all that one possesses. And, as the grace of God is required at every step in the moral and the spiritual development of man, it is very necessary that he should fall back upon it, by resorting to silent or vocal prayers before and after his regular hours of meditation. He should invoke the grace before he begins his meditation, and pray again with gratitude at the end of his meditation for being able to do his spiritual exercise without any disturbance of ideas other than that of the Name of God, or of any bodily and environmental conditions. He should continue to do this irrespective of the fact whether he sees the immaculate form of God or not. With God in his presence, his faith becomes invincible no doubt; but this does not mean that his prayers to God are less potent so long as he does not attain the stage of directly visualizing the face of God. For God is always a witness of what his devotees feel, think, do, or say, even though a few of them only can see God and see him always, and a fewer still can also hear His words.

There comes however a stage in the mystical career of a devotee of God, when, instead of complaining to Him about a physical ailment or an adverse circumstance, he learns to be contented with his lot, and so prays to God to give him only strength and courage to meditate and contemplate upon Him through thick and thin. Not that the physical and the material wants are totally and once for all eliminated even in the case of a God-intoxicated saint; not that the temptations of flesh and of material gain do not disturb him in the least. He too has to pass sometimes through the agonising moments due to the overwhelming influence of sin, unconscious lapses into vice and the consequent repentance. He too fears the loss of faith, the breaking down of courage and the consequent decadence in his devotion to God.

But the body is to fall one day or other, he knows full well; and so he gradually makes himself prepared for it. What he prays to God then is that he should remember the Name till his last breath is there, and that his senses and mind and intellect should all be focussed on some one or other of the innumerable forms of God. And so finally, all the earlier prayers end in the only prayer 'Lord, thy will be done.'

Thus it is that the sādhaka who is particularly keen about doing his daily meditation regularly and punctually and along with heart-felt prayers to God, is bound to move gradually from the physical and the material plane to that of the mental and the moral, and from the latter to that of the devotional and the spiritual. If he were to look then back upon the ground he has traversed, he would find that with all his errors, failings and lapses, the whole of his life is a well-knit, connected whole, on account of its being filled with the consciousness of God, and that this consciousness was kept alive by meditation and prayer. Thus it is that the original act of surrender and dependence on God which might have been a chance reaction of the helplessness due to the perplexities and the stress and strife in life, will, in the first place, be transformed into an unbreakable bond of love and communion with God by the constant exercise of meditation and prayer. And when the divine grace comes as an unobstructed, additional force and manifests itself in some or other form of divine energy such as a vision or an audition, then will secondly, the surrender, meditation and prayer transform the devotee into an image of God. Communion is changed into union, devotion into the blessedness of joy (ānanda), and the surrender and the resignation to the will of God is so complete that there will be no egoism left in the devotee of God. It will therefore be needless to say that where there is no prayer, excepting during the few ecstatic moments of complete identity between God and man, there will neither be any genuine recognition of the all-pervading omniscient, and omnipotent God, nor any conscious self-surrender and devout meditation. Much less will there be the vision of the sublime majesty of God, and the possibility of contemplation on Him, or of the appreciation of the grace of God. A spiritual life without any prayer is inconceivable to us; it will simply be an invitation to self-assertion, to arrogance, and egoism and will amount to shutting the doors against the grace of God.

Before closing this section, let us pick up a few examples of how some of the greatest saints of India have prayed to God.

1. Jñāneśvara asks grace from God, "May the wicked leave their crookedness and have increasing love for good. Let universal friendship reign among all beings. Let the darkness of evil disappear. Let the Sun of True Religion rise in the world. May the company of the devotees of God who shower down blessings incessantly meet the beings of earth! May all beings be endowed with all happiness and have incessant devotion to the Primeval Being. Let all those who live upon this work (Jñāneśvarī) have victory in the seen as well as the unseen! God said to this, 'Amen, this shall come to pass,' and Jñāneśvara became happy by hearing these words."[1]

2. Nāmadeva prays to God, "Let all my comrades in love and service to God have a long and happy life; let not the wind of egoism blow over them at any time, nor let them be deluded

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[1] Prof. R.D. Ranade, *Mysticism in Maharashtra*, p. 139.

by false imaginings; let the divine Name be always on their tongue and bring them all spiritual Good. And, let me not leave their company for a single moment, but be ever prepared to sacrifice my very life for the cause which is dear to them".

3. Just see how Tukārāma prays, "Grant me, O God, this one boon only, namely, that I may never forget you, and that I may always be in the company of the saints and sing with great love your excellent qualities. This is all I want, and not wealth, prosperity or liberation. I shall not mind, if it would please you to make me born agair and again, says Tukā."

4. Here is another prayer of Tukārāma, "Grant me this much favour, O saints, since you are so kind-hearted. Remember me to God, Pāṇḍuraṅga and narrating unto him the story of my sad and helpless plight, request him on my behalf not to keep me away from his feet, even though I am fallen and sinful beyond measure. I am sure, says Tukārāma, that God will not be indifferent to me, if you become the intermediaries."

5. Note how pitiably Rāmadāsa prays to the Lord, Śrī Rāma: "Be kind and meet me, O Lord; for, without you I feel that the whole of my body has lost its strength. It is impossible to fix my mind on any other object of pleasure. Time is hanging heavily on me; I cannot stop the shedding of tears, and I feel that life is coming out of me. Alas, day after day, the span of my life is being cut short and yet you are not showing your face to me! Do not forget me, O Lord; let me serve you without any break in it; and if you do not wish to meet me, then let this body fall. It is impossible for me to serve other lesser deities. When you are the protector of devotees, how can I rest satisfied by supposing that my fate is inevitable and that I must suffer? Who indeed can know the agony of my heart? I shall simply wait on you, O Rāma."

6. The prayer which Dādū makes to God takes the form: "Show your grace, O Lord, in such a way as will be a protective shield for your servants. Do not then desert us but bring us back to you even if we happen to go away from you; nor should you forget us, even if we forget you. It is likely we may go astray from the moral path; but please do not allow us to do so. I do not possess the qualities which you think to be necessary; even then, do kindly show me your face and embrace me."

7. "Alas, unsteady as my mind is," says Raidāsa, "how can

I be sincere in my devotion to you, O Lord, Narahari? Probably, the reason for my fickle-mindedness is that I do not see you, though it is said that you are immanent in the hearts of all, and that you can see them all. I know I am the repository of all vices; I make the distinctions between 'I' and 'thou' and between 'mine' and 'thine'. I am so ignorant; how indeed can I be saved unless you enable me to have a look at you and unless thereupon you and I begin to love each other? Let victory be to you, O kind-hearted Kṛṣṇa, as you are the support of this universe."

8. Saint Tulasīdāsa offers his prayer to Rāma by saying, 'Let me not, O Lord, place my faith or hope on account of my stupidity in any one else except you. I do not wish to have either wealth, prosperity, learning, status, power or any miraculous power; let me only have a disinterested love for your feet, O Rāma, and let it increase day by day. I do not mind if by the force of my bad actions I am obliged to be born even as the lowest of the creatures, provided your grace will be there at all times to protect me, just as the tortoise is said to protect its offspring by the mere sight. And let, O Lord, all my affections and hopes which are centred on my kith and kin here in this worldly life be concentrated on you alone."

9. "O Lord, O Gopāla, O you the master of my mind and the fulfiller of desires, you are the only protector of your humble devotees. When will you make me attain that state when my mind would constantly rest on your feet? When will my tongue taste the ambrosial juice while I sing your Name and glories? When will my eyes continue to shed tears out of gratitude for you, when will my throat be choked up with love for you, and when shall I experience horripilation all over my body? Then, indeed O Lord", says Sūradāsa, "I shall not be afraid of the terrible pangs of death. On the contrary, it will be Death who will be afraid to have a look at me, and so will hang his head low before me."

10. Here is the great saint Kabīra praying to God. "When shall I see you, my beloved Lord Śrī Rāma? For, without you I feel that my body is a painful burden to me. Since long I have been waiting to meet you within my heart, so that I may be able to sport with you. My soul is panting for breath without you, O Hari, just as a fish is when it is out of water. When indeed

shall my eyes which have been thirsty to see your form, O Rāma, be blessed to do so? For without you, I have been passing sleepless days and nights. Therefore, do not make any further delay, O Rāma; kindly accept me as your own and show me your face."

11. Finally, let us see how the saint Nānaka prays:

"You are, O Lord, as vast as an ocean. How can a fish like me measure your depth without any guide? I cannot even understand the distinction between a net which is spread out to catch me and a boatman who can save me. I only see you wherever I cast my glance, and therefore, whenever I find myself in anguish I remember you only. For, if I do not do so, I shall only meet with death. As you are omnipresent, you are also very close to me, no doubt, but I consider that you are far away from me. Whatever I do occurs in your presence and within your sight, but I do not understand this. Verily, I am not of any service to you, and so I cannot claim that I belong to you. I eat whatever you give me to eat, and lie down at your door. Why should I then go at the door of anyone else when I know that my soul and my breath are due to you only. O Lord, you are the beginning, you are the end, and you alone are in the middle. It is by your power that you have built this universe; and so it is you who are the seer of whatever is seen, and the hearer of whatever is heard. I pray to you, says Nānaka, to enable me to do what you think to be good for me. It will be both your order and permission for me to do that."

C. *The Divine Grace*

Grace is but a form of the supreme power of God, just as the pleasant and warm light of the rising Sun is a form of his flaming heat, or the cool and the refreshing breeze of the wind, a mode of behaviour of the otherwise devastating tempest. God is equally great in his wrath or smile, in his power of destruction or of protection. It is therefore just possible that his wrath may change into smile, and smile into wrath, and that wrath should destroy a thing only to create it anew, or his smile should appear to protect the evil only to destroy it soon. But guided by his selfish motives and tiny intellect man will never be able to understand and appreciate the grace of God which comes as a free gift, and as an unasked favour; it sometimes fulfills the desires of man even if he does not pray, and sometimes works quite against his wishes even though he prays with great earnestness. This makes him misjudge God, and say in a hurry that God is unkind to him in turning a deaf ear to his prayers; his faith dwindles; he becomes indifferent in his worship and meditation, and thus shuts the door against the divine grace itself. Soon does he become spiritually bankrupt; and then, there being nothing to save his soul, it is likely he might also become a moral wreck.

There are others who rely exclusively on their own, personal efforts and say that there can be a religion even without prayer and grace. What they probably mean is that we can become divine without there being the necessity of some super-human deity to help us in our endeavour. So, they resort to all sorts of penances, bodily tortures and mental hardships in order to possess super-natural powers, forgetting all the while that these powers also are due to God. And then, they become so puffed with pride and arrogance, that they do not hesitate to misuse their powers for personal enjoyments and for earning fame. In course of time, these power-hunters and miracle-mongers also fall too low in the estimate of the people, and die without knowing God and his grace.

As against these two types of ignorant and stupid persons, the devotee of God never entertains the idea of usurping in the least even a fraction of the power of God; for, that will be to him a blasphemy against God. Nor does he care for the super-natural yogic powers; these he considers as perishable trash. What he wishes to have, and have it always, is the grace of God on him; and this too, not as a return or reward for his merits or for his service to God and the saints, but as a favour or as a token of the divine pleasure for his love for God. He will use this grace as a fresh opportunity for making his faith, love and service to God stronger than before, and thereby help his fellow-men to do the same. Soon will he discern that the grace of God is always there like the air he breathes, and that it is required at every step in his moral and spiritual progress.

In fact, the very beginning of the spiritual life is not possible without the grace of God. It comes in the form of the initiation into the new life which the Guru does by bringing about the contact of the soul of the disciple with the Spirit of God.

It is immaterial for our present purpose to know how the Guru confers this obligation. He may do so by asking the disciple to meditate on a particular Name of God, or by imparting unto him first a spark of divine energy either by means of touch or sight, and then by asking him to meditate on the Name, or to contemplate on the Light or the Form or the Sound which the disciple would be able to see or hear. It must be borne in mind that the Guru acts chiefly as an intermediary between the disciple and God, and that the spiritual power comes directly from God. Even the divine Name (the 'mantra') imparted by the Guru is not the creation of the whim of the Guru, but is merely transmitted by him in the very form in which he receives it from God. A teacher who is spiritually great does not impose his own will on the disciple, though he is capable of doing so. He first comes to know the will of God and then simply makes it known to his disciple. The grace of the Guru over and above that of God consists however in the compassion which he feels for the ignorant and the miserable, since he has the human heart in him. It would be impossible for him to take a thoroughly dispassionate and a disinterested view of the sorrows and miseries of others by postulating a convenient, philosophical or theological theory that there is either the blind, merciless, inexorable law of karma which causes the fruition of the good or bad actions of the previous births into corresponding joys and sorrows, or an unconcerned, transcendent God who merely looks on, and who holding an equal balance of justice, dispenses rewards and punishments according to the merits and demerits of the individuals. More than the sense of justice, what the Guru has abundantly in him is the sense of mercy and consequent urge of redeeming the ignorant, the sinful and the miserable. The Guru intercedes with God for the sake of those who surrender unto Him, and implores God to be merciful and not simply just to them.

Grace is not however a blind force, though it can go 'where it listeth' without any let or hindrance, and is competent to do anything. It is a unique divine power which is neither conditioned by any human effort nor limited by any other divine powers, such as those which are involved in the creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe, or those that are responsible for the perpetual working of the law of causation or the law of Karma, or of the innumerable, mechanical, physiological, psychological and vital forces and processes in the organic and the inorganic world. It is the inconceivable, inscrutable, invisible and the original power behind all the above-mentioned powers, as also behind all the miraculous happenings which are mentioned in the yogic literature, and which do occur naturally and involuntarily in the lives of great saints.

It must be remembered in this connection that the miracles which are attributed to a saint are never owned by him as due to his own power, but are said to be the work of God. No doubt, a red-hot ball of iron will be capable of burning; but it is the fire in it which is the real cause of burning and not the ball of iron. Even so, it is the divine power, which becomes collected in a saint on account of his constant devout meditation, contemplation, surrender, prayer and socially benevolent actions, that must be considered as the cause of the incredible, miraculous happenings, and not the saint, if considered apart from this power. The saint does not manufacture the miracles, even though it might appear so to the outside world, and might even delude the official, man-made representatives of the so-called religious order. Unfortunately, a saint of a lesser calibre may fall a victim to the supposition that he is the maker of the miracles. But that will indicate his egoism only, and in course of time, he will be no better than a magician, an occultist or a hypnotist who boasts of his black art or his incidental and insignificant, supernatural powers.

One conclusive proof we can give to show that miracles happen by the power of the grace of God, and that they are not therefore the work of a saint, in so far as he is considered as an embodied human personality, is that they do occur even if the grace of the saint is invoked after his physical body is dead and gone far away in the past. This means two things. In the first place, a great saint is ever immortal whether he is living or dead; for he has become one with God. And once this is granted, it is immaterial, in the second place, whether we say that grace comes from God, or that it comes from the saint. In fact, it is easier, and more convenient to pray to the immortal Personality than to the Impersonal God. The Guru is the eternal Personal aspect of God, since the immaculate Form of his physical body and his Name which he once possessed remain forever with all the potent grace of God. And so, whoever wishes to have the divine grace can have it by meditating and contemplating on the Name and Form of any great living or departed saint of the world.

A caution or two should however be borne in mind while invoking the grace of the Lord or of the Guru. Grace is a wish-yielding tree, as it is called in the spiritual literature of India. One who is sitting under it should therefore desist from praying for the fulfilment of evil desires, such as the total ruin of one's enemies, or the obtainment of sensual and immoral pleasures and ill-gotten money. To do so will be to prepare an inclined plane for oneself to come down precipitously from the height of saintliness to the bottom of sensuality. And even if one is tempted to pray in this self-ruinous manner, one should not fail to say at the end of his prayer, 'Lord, this I wish to have out of my crookedness, selfishness and jealousy, but grant me only that much which will conduce to my moral and spiritual upliftment.' What this means is that our prayer for the grace of God must be through and through well thought out, conscious and meant for our moral and spiritual good only.

A few other notable points about the grace of God and its relation to the saints and devotees are the following. Grace, as we have said above, is not dependent on human efforts in the sense that one can demand it, even though he puts forth all his efforts to please God. For, God is not pleased by the amount of work one does, but by the quality of love and surrender to God and by the dedication of what the man does. But once the grace is experienced, the devotee must show both by his attitude and actions that he deserves to have it. To desire to have the grace and to pray in a ritualistic and mechanical manner for it, can be done even by the most undeserving and the selfish amongst us; but to feel that one is entirely dependent on God, as the child is on the mother, or the fish is on water, is the indispensable condition for being the recipient of the divine grace. What is true with reference to God is also true with reference to one's spiritual teacher. The flow of grace will certainly be constant, provided the attitude of love, dependence, and dedication of all that one does and possesses is constant. The key to the divine grace lies with the devotee; and so, the guiding principle for obtaining the grace of God is, 'deserve and then desire, and then again, try to preserve what you have got.'

Sometimes the grace comes in floods, in the forms of worldly prosperity and spiritual illumination. This should however be not only an occasion for rejoicing, but for being grateful to God. Besides, one need not assume that the flood may not recede. For, when it does recede the devotee is very likely to lose much of his faith and courage, and consequently might even give up his devotional attitude and meditation. The flood of grace ought to be understood as an indication of the prospect of the high watermark of the spiritual enlightenment reserved for him by God, and should therefore be considered as a welcome augury for a sustained and determined effort to do one's meditation at all costs and with greater and greater devotion, faith and joy. This will create the conviction that the grace of God will never be wanting though there is no flood of it. In fact, the warmth of a constant glow of that divine light is far better than a temporary, blazing heat of it. And, even if the former is not felt, and there are adverse circumstances indicating as if that they are the signs of the disfavour of God, one need not be afraid in the least, provided his meditation on the Name of God goes on very well. For, the meditation itself is the guarantee of the presence of God, though unmanifest, and therefore of the presence of His grace also. When further, the devotee becomes fortunate to see the Form of God, he gets an additional assurance that God's grace is with him. For, will not the grace of God be with God, just as the light of the Sun must be with the Sun? In short, one who meditates on the divine Name, and one who contemplates on the divine Form become necessarily endowed with all the grace of God, even though their prayers may not be granted for their own personal good which they might not understand on account of their limited knowledge. Even the infliction of sorrow in the presence of God will turn out to be a blessing in disguise.

Extraordinary is the manner in which the grace of God makes its appearance. Unexpected and unnoticed it comes in stealthily as if, at the nick of time and saves the devotees from being crushed under the weight of calamities and dangers, and from being washed away by illusions and make-believes. Sometimes, in order to test the faith and courage of his devotees, God makes a show of withdrawing his grace and his presence, but stands very close to them to give them support and immediate relief. For instance, the vision the devotee is seeing before him might suddenly disappear, and there would emerge for the devotee what is known as the Dark Night of the soul. Indeed, this becomes a terrible condition for the soul to bear. He has already lost the pleasures of the worldly life by his venture in spiritual life, and now he has also lost the vision of God which he had by the grace of God. He feels himself to be a loser both ways. But if he would take up a little courage and continue to meditate as before with unfaltering faith and love, he would soon find that the Dark Night was only a small and a temporary cloud, with the passing away of which the Sun of divine beauty would smile upon him with a new light of grace. Or suppose, the devotee or some one dearest to him is dangerously ill, and that he is discharged from a reputed hospital as an incurable patient of T.B., or that he is being carried to the surgical table for being operated upon an ulceric condition of the stomach as perhaps the last remedy to save him. And then, suppose, as a miracle as if, the grace of a saint comes in the form of an assurance that the patients are going to live for a further span of fifty or sixty years at least, and that it does turn out to be a fact. Now, all this would be sufficient for the devout to become convinced that the grace of the saint or of God was competent to do what appeared as impossible for all the medical treatment, though to several other people, it may strike as nothing but an accident or a chance. It is likely, no doubt, that once or twice what is really an accident or chance might be construed as divine grace on account of the enthusiastic and hasty notions of the devotee. But if on nine out of ten occasions, one has reason to conclude that no other explanation except the grace of God is responsible for a particular event or happening, and if this becomes a constant experience in the life of a devotee, will it be proper to say that he is too credulous to have a scientific attitude? After all, we have to rest content with the fundamental character of all spiritual phenomena including that of grace that with all their objectivity, universality and necessity, they are chiefly the objects of direct, personal and intuitive experience, and not of empirical observation which can be demonstrated in a laboratory of a biologist or a chemist. Here, in the spiritual life, the experience is necessarily personal only, though it will be found eternally to be the same all over the world and at all times, so far as any other saint is concerned.

One may ask if there is any criterion by reference to which a person can be said to have been not only touched but endowed by the grace of God. The reply is that the criteria which go to determine the saintliness of a person are the very criteria to determine the existence of the divine grace on him. For, the saint is a unique phenomenon, wrought out exclusively by the grace of God. None can attain to sainthood by his own efforts, if God does not wish him to be so. For, as the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* (1, 2, 23.) says, it is God who makes the choice of his instrument and moulds it as He likes in order to get His plans executed through it, even though it is broken and most unworthy to do so. This is how due to the divine will and grace only that Vālmīki and Nāmadeva who were supposed to be marauders have become the greatest saints; and St. Paul who was deadly against Lord Christ has become the greatest apostle of Christianity. So, the measure and the criterion of grace is the degree or extent to which man has moved from his original, sinful and selfish mode of living to the devout, meditative and contemplative life of the Spirit. His love, reverence and service of the saints and of God, his attitude of surrender, dedication of works and of all that he is and has, his upright and moral behaviour, his service to humanity, and above all his joy and peace which grow day by day on account of his having more and more experience of the grandeur, the majesty, the sublimity and the beauty of the concrete presence of the Divinity before him, are, so to say, the manifold criteria of the grace of God on him. The compassion he feels for the miserable and the sinful, and his efforts to make them joyful by bringing them on the path of God, are all due to the grace of God.

It is, no doubt, easy and convenient for the slothful and the pretender to put forth the excuse that they cannot meditate and strive hard, because God is not kind to them. They should, however, remember that though grace is all in all, human efforts are praiseworthy only to the extent to which they show that there is genuine aspiration on the part of man to realize God and to receive and preserve the grace whenever it would come. The divine grace is raining down incessantly. Should not one therefore prepare his body and mind in advance as the indispensable receptacles to hold that water of grace and keep it in good condition by putting in the required moral and spiritual efforts? One must ever be alert to receive the grace; or else unnoticed will it come, and unheeded will it go away. Even such a saint as Mirābāi tells us with a note of repentance that she was sleeping when God, her beloved, came to her house and was moving in her very court-yard. When this happens occasionally even in the case of great saints, how can the dull and the unfortunate people be expected to catch the grace even if it flows over them?

In the case of those however whom God himself chooses as his instruments, how and when the grace comes, how He arranges the circumstances and situations, and how He shapes and moulds his devotees into powerful instruments to work out His plans is beyond the comprehension of human intelligence. That grace does not necessarily conform to the mathematical law of proportion or to that of cause and effect, can very well be seen by taking into consideration how even a novice can have very rich spiritual experiences, when the so-called stalwarts and advanced sādhakas who had toiled for years lag far behind him. To him is given the Kingdom of God in the twinkling of an eye; others do not reach even the portals of the city! The sinner goes ahead; the meritorious comes limping after him! And yet, when the devotees flock together for the purpose of meditation and are in the company of great saints, the grace spreads its protective wings equally on them all. For, in the presence of the saints who are verily the embodiments of God, all are equal, and so, shall also share the fruits of His grace equally.

What more brilliant description can be given of the grace of God than what the Hindi saint, Sūradāsa, has done by saying that God himself unfurls his umbrella of grace and holds it on the head of his devotee, even though he is the poorest of all. Tulasīdāsa supports this statement as if, when he says that he was once living as a beggar upon alms, but that after he had become the servant of God, even kings began to honour him.

Gratitude, Love and Loyalty

If surrender, meditation and prayer are required to make up the spiritual life, gratitude, love and loyalty are required for preventing the spiritual life from becoming a haphazard or a stunted growth. And, assuming that the grace of God is always there to support and help the human effort which must be put forth in all these six ways, the spiritual life is bound to be a continuous, strong and healthy growth. We have already dealt with the respective functions of the first three; we shall now deal with the last three and see how they work both as the important ingredients of spiritual life and the cementing or the cohesive forces which bring together all its aspects and facts and experiences into one, indivisible, and homogeneous, divine whole.

D. Gratitude

Gratitude has its face directed to the past; for therein lies all the best material which one can use for building his reputation as a man of moral and spiritual greatness. There are people who ask us to bury the past; 'to ring out the old' in order 'to ring in the new'. But if the new is meant to be totally disconnected with the past, it will not be a human life. Memory is one of the noblest gifts of Nature; and to cultivate it and to be able to recall incidents of even the remote past which would influence and mould the present and the future in the life of a man, is a great human virtue. No doubt, time is irreversible, and none can bodily live again the spatio-temporal events of his past life. History does not repeat in this sense. The battle of Waterloo was fought only once, and will never be fought again. The same trousers of our young age will never fit us again in old age. Yet, what is thus impossible in the physical sense is possible for the mind to re-create and set the clock backwards, so that one can enter into the past and fight the same battle again and over again, or use the same trousers as many times as one would like. The mind's power of bringing back to memory the things and events of the past and of making them appear as if they are happening for the first time, is so great that one can be perpetually young even while he is old. This however is not always a good exercise for the normal mind.

Instead of boarding the train which has entered into the station, if one were to busy himself in recalling how best he had fielded in a cricket match of his young days, he would not only miss the train but rue the occasion in all his future life. This then is clear, that the past must be partially forgotten or set aside and remembered also in part.

But which things are retained in memory and which things slip out of it is not easy to tell. Sometimes, things one wishes to remember are forgotten, because one does not care to attend to them with sufficient interest, and sometimes things one wishes to forget are remembered all the more with greater force, because on them is focussed all the attention. Thus, quite in an involuntary manner, generally, things are either remembered or forgotten. But this should never be the case, if one wishes to use his memory for being grateful and virtuous. It must be so trained and developed as would enable one to recall with the slightest effort the entire picture before his mind's eye of the situation and even the smallest particular in it which was responsible for bringing about a great change in his life or for saving him from a critical and dangerous condition. And if one is careful enough to remember all such occasions, he would find that there are numerous reasons for being grateful to others. The loving parents, the kind teachers, the helpful playmates, the affectionate wife, children and friends will then certainly be remembered with gratitude for their countless obligations in life. Much more will a conscientious and dutiful person feel indebted throughout his life also to those who might have once obliged him for their personal benefit, or shown their regard and love to him even out of necessity and pretence, but who, after their purpose is served, did not hesitate to show him their real teeth of jealousy, wickedness and treachery. To such cheats and scoundréls too he would help, because of his gratitudefor them and of his keen sense of duty. He would look to them not with vengeance but with forgiveness. Born out of gratitude, his sense of duty too will not simply be proportionate to the remuneration he gets in return, or for the sake of pleasing his superiors only, but will be a fitting response to the end which he wishes to attain in his life. His present duty will be much influenced by his sense of gratitude for the past. And as ingredients of the spiritual life both gratitude and duty will be determined by his attitude towards God. And so, his intellectual training also will be such as will enable him to bind the past and the present by his love towards God. He would then readily believe in what Wordsworth says about duty, namely, that 'she is the stern daughter of the voice of God,' or would like to judge his own sense of duty by applying to it the standard which Longfellow had supplied to him even in his school-days, namely, to act, 'with heart within and God over head.'

Thus it is that being led by the combined forces of the feeling of gratitude, of the sense of duty and of the loving attitude to God, one would never make the mistake of giving up the past as dead and gone, but would link it up with all its pleasant and unpleasant memories to the present, and being equally profited by both the goodness and wickedness of the world, would so behave that he would be loyal to his conscience as well as to God. Gratitude, in short, for all the kindness which one might receive in words or deeds from any source, will not only bridge the gulf between the past and the present, but will also be a guarantee for all the upright and righteous conduct of the man in his future career. It will heal up the wounds of insult and calumny caused by unscrupulous, and selfish cheats, soften down one's anger and sense of retaliation, make him more forbearing and forgiving, and ultimately, being touched by the grace of God enable him to be just and merciful to all. And, if all this is possible for one with reference to ordinary men in the world on account of gratitude being there, how much more will it be possible on the spiritual level? Day in and day out, nay from hour to hour, one would remember his Guru with gratitude for not only the spiritual instruction which was imparted to him, but also for the incessant care and kindness which the Guru must have shown in protecting his disciple from falling into various temptations, pitfalls and difficulties and dangers in life. Gratitude for the spiritual teacher is not however without a reward. It produces in the mind of the disciple an attachment for his Guru, which soon develops into an attitude of love, reverence, awe and even a sort of fear, exactly an attitude which he would soon after develop with reference to God.

E. Love and Loyalty

With love and trust in the Guru and in God coming immediately after gratitude, his material life also would be greatly influenced thereby; it will be virtuous, happy and peaceful, and there would be no hiatus between the material and the spiritual. They will run not simply as two parallel currents but will mix into each other and run as one single stream of life. The spiritual will be reflected in the material, and the virtues of the material will strengthen the spiritual. Love and gratitude for God will cement and solder the two parts of life. It will be a life divine lived to fulfil a divine purpose and plan. But that it should be a stable and continuous life without setbacks and onslaughts of distrust or misgivings, a third element is absolutely necessary. It is loyalty. It is not made up of sincerity alone; nor it is simply gratitude, faith or love; it is all these made unshakable by the firm resolve to remain attached to God through thick and thin. Opportunists are many who speak too much about God and cling to Him when they are in difficulties, but forsake Him when all goes well with them Such persons are not only disloyal but also ungrateful. Their faith is mercenary; their love, a pretence; and their sincerity is only skin-deep. The loyal servant of God is ever prepared to leave all, even his life, for the sake of God. His love for God is the sap of his very life; his faith and sincerity are the marrow of his bones; and his loyalty is just another name for his undaunted courage and fearlessness to stand any ordeal to which he might be subjected. Love, we have said, is strengthened by gratitude; and it is such love, again, which strengthens the faith and loyalty to God. Love absorbs the gratitude; and loyalty absorbs them both; and so, faith becomes ultimately stronger than death. Here alone in the loyal servant of God. The past never dies, and the present is not a solitary moment which has no connection with the past or the future. The present is big with the past, and is the promise and the guarantee of the future. The entire life thus becomes a solid, continuous and indivisible offering to God. And all this happens because the gracious manifestation of God in some form or other remains with the devotee as the constant guide and companion, and as the source of energy, power, bliss and peace.

11

Nature of Spiritual Experience

1. Reality must be capable of being experienced

WITH MORALITY on the one hand, and with unswerving, constant meditation on the other, an ardent devotee of God is bound to reap the harvest of spiritual experience. Ever since he is received in the sacred fold by the Guru, the grace of God is on him. The initiation itself is the greatest act of grace. That the devotee remains faithful on the path, in spite of obstacles and pitfalls, is again due to the constant grace of God. The toils alone would be of no avail, if God were not to send his grace. At every step and throughout the journey it is required, though all the while the sādhaka is not conscious of it. Realization of God in some form or other is the first tangible, concrete event which will make him aware of the greatness of the Guru and the importance of the grace. He will now remember his Guru with utmost gratitude and humility, and depending on the grace of God, will toil all the more to grow stronger in his spiritual experience by having more and more of it.

Various are the ways in which God will manifest Himself. He may appear as light or as a vision; be heard as sounds or smelt as perfume; tasted as sweet, or felt as delightful to the touch. He may appear in the form of the devotee, or of any other finite being or thing, or yet again, as the Universal Self. Like a steady star He may appear in a mild form and attract the devotee, or may drown him in the ocean of miracles, by appearing in various, queer and fearful forms. Our task in the present chapter is not to prepare an inventory or a catalogue of these various forms of spiritual experience. It will serve no purpose except creating a sort of vain and painful curiosity in the minds of those who are believers in God, and an unthinking criticism and ridicule in the minds of those who do not believe in Him. We have to steer our course between the two. Sufficient will it be, if we show the fringe of mystical experience; it will both be a guidance and a foretaste for those who have a desire and a will to have similar experiences, by treading the self-same toilsome path, which we have described at so great a length in the last four chapters. We shall therefore presently proceed to a careful examination of the characteristics of the spiritual experience, remembering all the while that the real from the metaphysical point of view is also real from the psychological or the experiential point of view; and that nothing is metaphysically real which is not at the same time real psychically, that is, as forming part of the experience of some one.

This way of identifying the metaphysical with the experiential leaves room for illusions and hallucinations as likely to be included in the domain of the Real; for, they too are a part of experience as a whole. We shall have to be very cautious in distinguishing the Real from the illusory, especially in the field of spiritual experience, because it is the most personal and incommunicable. The fool, the rascal and the credulous may join hands with the wise, the honest and the mystic, and together declare that their experience is genuine and trustworthy, and therefore affords ground for metaphysical generalizations. We will have done a great service for the type of mystical religion we wish to uphold, if we succeed in categorically and definitely pointing out the exclusively peculiar characteristics of spiritual experience. In so doing, we shall restrict ourselves to the spiritual experience which appears in the form of a vision; for, thereby, we shall not unnecessarily complicate our procedure, but shall have all the characteristics which we wish to point out. As experience is a complex matter, it goes without saying that we shall deal with it in all its aspects, namely, the subjective and the objective, as well as the cognitive, affective and conative.

2. *Illusion, Hallucination and Delusion*

An illusion is an erroneous perception of something which does not exist, but appears as existing in place of another thing which actually exists and resembles the illusory object in certain respects, but is not perceived. For the occurrence of an illusion, there must be, in the first place, two objects which resemble each other in certain respects. Secondly, the illusory object must have been perceived in the past. Thirdly, there comes about the synthesis of the 'that' aspect of the existing but unperceived object with the 'what' aspect of the non-existing but the perceived object of illusion. And finally, the mind which makes the synthesis of the 'that' or the simple awareness of the existing object with the 'what' or the meaning of the object of illusion, is either predisposed or is in a hurry. The serpent resembles a rope in being long, zigzag and of a dark colour; and the person who sees a rope in the darkness of the night makes the mistake of understanding it as a serpent, because he is either in a hurry to interpret correctly the visual or the tactual impression of the rope, or is afraid of going in the dark. Two more points which should be noted in connection with illusion are that, in the first place, there would be no illusion if out of the two things, rope and snake, the illusory object is not seen before at any time. Secondly, the illusion can be corrected by bringing in the light and seeing for oneself that it is a rope and not a serpent.

Now, what is the evidence to think that a vision of God might be an illusion except the free will of somebody? There are no two objects, no partial resemblance between them, no synthesis of perception and memory, no superimposition of the object of memory on the object of perception, and consequently no correction of what is falsely believed. Perhaps, one might say that an illusion occurs even if there are no two objects. A mirage produces the belief that there is water, even though there is no other object on which it is superimposed. The sky appears as blue, though there is only one sky and nothing else. Or, one may press his eye by his finger and see two moons. Even so, one might contend that the vision of God might be a case of illusion. We say in reply that all this is totally wrong. A mirage appears only on a vast and distant expanse of sand or on a tar-road on account of the reflection of the light of the Sun. The sky is not an object at all, except for the purpose of popular usage in language: and the blue colour is the colour of the light as seen from a particular distance. The pressing of one eye, when the other is open, disturbs the convergence of the two eyes on the object of perception. If one eye is pressed, and the other is shut, there will be no appearance of the two moons. The objector has given us no clue except his own wishful thinking whereby it can be said that there occurs the illusion of the vision of God, even when there is nothing to be perceived.

The objector may change the argument and say that the so-called vision of God might be a hallucination, if not an illusion, since what Psychiatry and Clinical neurology now believe is that there can be a perceptual impression even when a corresponding external stimulus is lacking. And, since a hallucination also, like a divine vision, can be auditory, visual, olfactory or aural, it is very necessary to distinguish clearly between the two by pointing out the exclusive characteristics of each of them.

A hallucination is, in the opinion of most psychiatrists, 'a symbol of repressed wishes, and it helps to reveal emotional conflicts'.[1] Or, as pointed out by Dr. Allen J. Enclow, it is a 'manifestation of psychotic depression' which is due to 'environmental stresses such as loss of beloved ones, threateningly serious diseases, disappointments, etc.'[2] A psycho-analyst may like to say that it is the work of libido. In short, it is due to some pathological condition, and must be thriving in a patient who is very sensitive, imaginative, emotional and lacking in reason and will. An abnormal development on the affective side, and a corresponding deficiency on the cognitive and conative sides of personality makes him extremely susceptible to his own imaginary suggestions which might give rise to emotions of fear and helplessness without any other tangible reason. And being incapable of any adequate action, he fancies that he hears some sounds or voices, sees some visions, or smells something, and so on. He becomes a victim of his own sense of guilt or sin, and condemns himself and becomes miserable. It is also important to note that a hallucinatory person cannot induce hallucinations into another person by keeping company with him.

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[1] *Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia*, ed. 1960, p. 560.

[2] *Depression in Medical Practice*, ed. 1971.

Such is not the case with the visions and the auditions of a God-realized saint. It is possible he may temperamentally be more rational than devotional, or more active than rational; but as at the back of his reason, feeling and will, there is always the support of intuition in the sense of an altogether new faculty of God-realization, which is awakened in him by another God-realized soul, it is almost impossible that he should have any repressed desires in him, or that his personality might be defective by too great an exuberance of libidinous emotions and their conflicts. Prior to his having received the grace of God through his spiritual teacher, and prior to his having resorted to meditation on the Name of God, the saint too like any other ordinary unfortunate person, might have severely suffered from calamities, diseases, frustrations, emotional and environmental stresses and even repressed desires; but in course of time, all these become minimised by the power of his meditation, and all his desires, suppressed or otherwise, are burnt in the fire of the knowledge of God. Perchance there might remain a residual effect; and it may linger as a physical disability or disease even in the case of a saint; for he too has a body which is susceptible to the forces of Nature. But there cannot be any deficiency so far as the normal, human personality is concerned. On the contrary, sharpened will be his intellect, refined his emotions, and resolute and firm his will and character, as they all will be rooted in the power and knowledge of God. Suspicions, doubts, imaginings, fears and anxieties will all leave him; and in him will be found strength of moral courage; and in him the source of joy, confidence, fearlessness and freedom, so that others also can take inspiration from him and become as healthy-minded and joyful as he is. The visions and the voices which he will then have will be the result of his meditation and of the grace of God. They are not only the harbingers of Reality, but are also constitutive of Reality; but certainly not the symptoms of ailments which will be clinically and psychiatrically diagnosed and treated.

One might contend that the mystic too is an abnormal personality, since the visions and voices which he claims to have are not experienced by ordinary human beings. This is true in a sense. But, whereas the hallucinations are subjective fancies only, the experiences of the mystic have objective validity, as we shall presently point out in so many ways. The mystic too might tremble with fear, and feel overpowered by the majesty and sublimity of the vision before him; but soon will he be able to drown his fear in the love and adoration which he would feel for it. His trance and ecstatic ejaculations might appear to an onlooker as the effects of lunacy, epilepsy or some other pathological condition. But the fact that he does not require any one else to control him, or that he does not require any medicine or psychiatrical treatment for restoring him the equipoised calm of serenity, joy and peace, proves that the saint and the hallucinatory are poles apart from each other. An hallucination is a temporary phenomenon; it begins and it lasts till the pathological condition lasts. And though, it is not capable of being corrected like the illusion, since there is no external stimulus for the occurrence of an hallucination, it comes to an end as soon as the emotional crisis is over. Sometimes a patient suffering from visual or auditory hallucinations feels shy and tries to conceal them; on the other hand, the saint feels proud to find that he is a beloved of God to have the glimpses of his glorious visions, and though he may not like to speak about them before the unbelievers, he never hesitates to narrate them joyfully for the spiritual benefit of the world. Hallucinations are never shared in common by two or more persons; that is, they are hardly identically of the same nature. The visions of the mystic are not only the same for himself throughout the weeks, months and years, excepting that they may grow in beauty, vividness and size, and can not only be had at any hour of the day and night, and in any place where he casts his eyes, but they may also be identically the same for any other mystic, either in the same moment of time or in the same place, or at any other time and place, all over the world. Let one who suspects that the spiritual visions and voices etc. of the saint might also be hallucinatory in nature, inquire of the patient if his visual hallucination, for instance, like the vision of the saint, can be seen equally on the flames of fire, in floods, in the sky, in the darkness of night and learn for himself that it is not so. Whether the eyes are shut or are kept open, the vision of the Lord remains constant in its beauty and splendour; it is not so with hallucination. None can induce another to have the experience of hallucination; in the company of the saints, the divine visions manifest of their own accord.

If then there is nothing in common between the vision and the hallucination, much less will the belief in spiritual reality be a case of delusion, which continues to be held inspite of evidence to the contrary. Who indeed can help a fanatic, and who indeed can prove to the mystic that he is wrong? Though, in a sense, both of them live in their own worlds, the fanatic makes a hell of his own life and disturbs the peace and joy of others, while the mystic opens the doors of the kingdom of God for himself and for others in order that they all should enjoy the supreme joy of being in the presence of God.

3. *Characteristics of the Object of Spiritual Experience*

Let us now begin to describe the nature of the object of spiritual experience. In the first place, it is unique and novel. It is unique because no experience will be found to correspond to it; though by a sort of description we may try to give a very poor representation of it in sensuous imagery. Howsoever the memory may try, no trace of it will be found in the huge store of the sensuous experience of the past. Imagination will in vain scratch her head to fill up the gap by inserting something between the sensuous and the suprasensuous. No amount of thinking will enable us to speak of it in terms of the antecedent and the consequent or as of cause and effect. It is impossible that we shall ever have it by a stroke of will. 'It goes where it listeth,' and like the appearance of a rainbow in the sky, is beyond our control. Intuition alone can grasp it.

It is novel in the sense that it is experienced for the first time, the like of it was never experienced before. In ordinary everyday experience, we talk of things being unique and novel, but when we have the like of them very often they lose their uniqueness and novelty. Not so with the spiritual experience. For, there is perpetual growth in it; and so; there is, almost perpetually some aspect of it, which appears as unique and novel. Here custom does not blunt sensibility, but rather sharpens it. The growth and the change in it come off so suddenly that it strikes the mind with surprise. It grows and changes either very slowly or suddenly. The manner in which it will change or grow can never be foretold, nor even anticipated in a general way, as will be the change of our friend's behaviour or the growth of his friendship on account of our acquaintance with his character and environment. There is neither any fixed and steady character or quality of it, nor any environment in respect to which it responds. Rāmadāsa asks us simply to be passive and watch it as it appears, lest it should vanish away as suddenly as it presents itself (at least in the case of a novice). This sudden appearance and disappearance, and reappearance of its own accord and at its sweet pleasure is, indeed, unlike the objects of the perceptible world, unique and novel. With wonder piled upon wonders and over which he has no control, the aspirant is simply struck with the uniqueness and novelty of the spiritual experience, and so remains tongue-tied and silent.

Another characteristic of spiritual experience which can be explained as the natural, inevitable result of the characteristics we have just observed, is that it is attractive. We know that our attention is diverted and arrested by things in various ways. Things attract us because of their (1) movement, (2) novelty, (3) sudden occurrence, (4) glaring colours, (5) pitch, (6) intensity, (7) volume, etc. The spiritual experience also arrests the attention in these various ways; but it has a peculiar sublimity of its own, which not only arrests the attention but also keeps the mind pinned to it for a longer time. A beautiful landscape, an evening sky with all its profuse hues, the roaring anger of a stormy sea, a young lady of a perfect form and exquisite beauty are all of them instances of things which captivate the soul. But there is a limit or a saturation point, beyond which the soul refuses to be pleased by the repetition of these experiences. And if any one of them is presented continuously without allowing the others to alternate, the sense of monotony comes all the more quickly. The spiritual experience also appears in various forms, so that with change and alteration the mind is immensely pleased. Yet, there is no limit to the soul's capacity for feeling the joy, or of the object (the vision, the sound, etc.) yielding this joy. There is a perpetual thirst for having more and more of it, and there is a perpetual supply of it. Even with the same experience day in and day out, and no other to alternate with it, the mind never has the sense of dull monotony. There is no ebb or flow to the fullness of joy, as Tukārāma says. The only limitation will be of the physical body which becomes tired because it is incapable of keeping pace with the mind. The body will require rest and so there will be perforce a retiring of the mind also. It is said that philosophy begins in wonder, but spiritual life not only begins but also grows and ends in wonder and joy.

The object of mystical experience, besides being a source of joy, is curiously and paradoxically, a source of fear also. We are told in the *Bhagavadgītā* that Arjuna was immensely pleased at the sight of the vision of the all-pervading Ātman, because the like of it was never seen before; at the same time, he was exceedingly frightened when he witnessed the vision destroying everything before it. This mingling of contrary emotions is a peculiar phenomenon that attends some of the richest mystical experiences. No doubt, the sublime and the majestic aspects of natural phenomena, such as the vast expanse of the Ganges in floods seen from a high railway bridge, the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, and the starry sky above, inspire us with awe and delight. But the object of spiritual experience is so glorious in beauty, splendour and purity that it is not only awe-inspiring and lovable, but also has so powerful an influence on us that it compels us to bend our heads with humility and reverence for it. As Rudolf Otto says, it creates a 'numinous' state of mind, which is 'perfectly *sui generis* and irreducible to any other.' When analysed, it is found to possess the elements of Tremendum, Majestas and Energy or Urgency, that is, the elements of awfulness or shuddering, of being overpowered by creature-consciousness, and of vitality and emotional force. The mystical object which is 'wholly other', supreme and powerful, creates, in the first place, the shudder on account of which, 'the soul 'which is held speechless trembles inwardly to the fullest fibre of its being.' Secondly, it creates the sense of creature-consciousness due to which 'the finite self becomes conscious of its nullity,' and declares that 'I am nought, Thou art all.' Thirdly, it vitalizes the whole being of the man on account of the emotional stirring it gives rise to.[1]

This reverential attitude, when it is combined with devotion, makes the object almost a steady one. Unlike the sensuous objects of observation and introspection, it is not evanescent. A white spot on a black surface, for instance, becomes invisible after a prolonged concentration. The emotion of anger loses much of its intensity and sting if it becomes itself the object of introspection. The object of mystical experience, on the contrary, gains in brightness and distinctness with greater and greater concentration; nay, when even the eyelids close on account of great strain, the object is still seen.

The object of mystical experience is further non-spatial and non-temporal. It cannot be located in space, or dated in time. Though, subjectively, space and time are involved in the experience of it, as in all sensuous experience, when for example, a person (St. Paul) had had the first vision of God in a particular place (Damascus), at a particular time (noon), the vision, as objectively considered, is not limited by space and time. The things in my room are determined by the walls of my room, and they shall be there so long as I wish to keep them in that way. But the vision, supposing it, for the sake of simplicity, to have made its appearance on the transparent glass of a window in the room, cannot be said to have been limited by the glass. For, it is at once on this and on the other side of the glass, as well as on the glass itself. If I hold a paper between my eyes and the distant mountain which I see, my perception of the mountain will be obstructed by the sheet of paper. But the vision which was appearing on the mountain will, if a paper be held between the eye and the mountain, appear in exactly the same way on the paper itself. If the piece of paper be brought closer and closer to the eye, the vision will still appear on the paper, and appear even within the eyelids. If one should try to catch hold of a thing by hand, the Brahman, says Rāmadāsa, will appear between the hand and the thing; and similarly, if one were to open a book and try to read it, the Brahman would appear even on the page, the word and the alphabet.

For the mystical object, then, there is absolutely no barrier that will limit it; and the language of distance and spatial dimensions has no meaning with reference to it. It is at once far away and near; it is in all directions upwards and downwards. The very direction would have some meaning with reference to some fixed point, which is in one place and not in another; but the object of mystical experience appears in all places; it is here, there and everywhere, simultaneously. It does not fill the space so that space is first and its being afterwards. The idea of space is a human, artificial production to account for the relatedness of things that limit each other. From the point of view of the one omnipresent, homogeneous reality, there is neither relatedness nor things that limit each other. Even so, the idea of space disappears during the moments of spiritual experience.

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[1] *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 8-23.

Time, too, like space, is an element that is absolutely necessary for progress and development of any kind. And spiritual progress is no exception. The devotee gains everything gradually and in the fullness of time. What is then meant by saying that the object of mystical experience is non-temporal in its essence?

Let us, in the first place, substitute for the negative term 'non-temporal' a positive one like 'eternal,' remembering that eternity is not the same thing as time, extended endlessly in both the directions of the past and the future. 'Eternity' and 'Time' (even endless time) have nothing in common though they are not incompatible with each other. We become aware of time on account of the struggle we have for something other than ourselves. There is a perpetual encroachment on this other which serves as an ideal, and the perpetual assimilation of the other with one's own self. And yet, in all sensuous experience there is at best a perfect resemblance but no identity. A John Stuart may want to be an excellent historian like Macaulay; he may become so in course of time by imitating Macaulay in every respect; but there will be resemblance between the two, and no identity. The individuality of each will persist, and make them aware of the several points of difference between them. Duration of time and the temporal flow of events will be apprehended and appreciated by both of them in different ways, so long as these differences exist; so long as, to use the words of Leibnitz, they are both of them 'discernibles'. Experience of an Identity (and not the intellectual understanding of the Logical Law of Identity) is the only form of life in which the sense of time is lost. To express this life by a remote analogy, we should take the case of lovers. They forget the sense of time in their deep sexual enjoyment. They live as it were a common life, and so they may be called, in the words of Leibnitz again, 'Indiscernibles.'

When Being is like Being, when it mirrors itself, or to be more accurate, when it projects itself into its own object, there is the self-same, identical life, which can never be discerned as two. In moments of ecstasy and rapture, when there is absolutely no trace of duality, or of the struggle of the finite to assimilate itself with the Infinite, the whole sense of time and of duration is lost. The mystic who enjoys the vision of God is, during that moment of time, living also the eternal life, because that vision which appears to be there out in space, is also pent up within him.

To proceed to a further characteristic, the object of mystical experience defies the logical law of contradiction inasmuch as contradictory predicates can be asserted about it at the same time. Contradictions do not, however, go to form the mystical object in the manner of the Hegelian dialectic. It is not a synthesis of a prior thesis and an anti-thesis. Neither can it be said to follow from them, as the logical conclusion follows from the premises. When analysed, the object of mystical experience presents the contradictions as necessary elements or moments of a self-identical life. And again, the contradictory aspects of that experienced object are not of the logical nature, one positive and the other negative. Both are positive elements from the view-point of experience, though it bewilders the intellect of a student of formal logic. Even in our ordinary life we can find analogous examples of experience where the contradictory aspects of it appear to be soldered together. 'To be or not to be' was such a complex question to Hamlet; our whole moral life is beset with conflicts of the opposites which alternate with each other so that attention may be given to them easily and fully; and secondly, they issue in a conduct which either suppresses one of them or both of them and finds a new departure. The mystical object is also unique in this respect that, presenting contradictions, it is not contradicted.

by any or both of them; that the contradictions themselves have their being in the self-identity of the object so that there is no need that one of them must vanish to make room for the other; or that both of them should vanish to give rise to a third something which would be the synthesis of the two. Contradictions are the ways in which the object becomes equally manifest, and so appear to enter into the very constitution of Reality.

It is on account of this inherent, contradictory nature of the mystical object that, as the Bhagavadgītā says (13.13-17), it appears at once to be near and far off; inside and outside of things; undivided in spite of division and dividedness; bereft of all qualities and full of them; darker than the darkest, and brighter than the brightest; smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest; and seen in front of one's face and seen at the same time in all directions.

It is on account of this peculiar nature of mystical Reality, that the mystical experience also appears contradictory in nature. 'As soon as we begin to be aware of it, we forget it. But as soon as we forget it, it comes within the ken of our consciousness. When we go to see God we miss him. But we see God without going anywhere to meet him. This indeed is the virtue of spiritual Epoche.'[1] This means that inasmuch as the spiritual experience is a peculiar experience of oneness or identity where there is absolutely no consciousness of the subject-object relation, to have such a consciousness of the difference between the subject or the devotee, and the object or God, is to miss the essence of the unitive, silent life. In the game of hide-and-seek of this spiritual knowledge, as Rāmadāsa tells us, one should be nothing in spite of his being everything. The treasure of this experience can be had by meditation alone. One who has attained to it gets a unique satisfaction which is not dependent on a prior want; one forgets the functioning of the mind, and of the senses in the silent enjoyment of God. That is why the blind and the deaf can have that experience. One who attains to it is a King of the spiritual world and can save others; one who does not is a beggar.

Another very difficult question we have to decide is whether motion can be attributed to the object of spiritual experience or not. Testimony is on both the sides. The object is declared to be moving as well as steady and fixed. With unimaginable speed, it is seen as moving from one direction to any other direction; with faithfulness, as it were, it accompanies the devotee and is sometimes fixed like a painted picture on a wall. Add to this the panorama of visions, and the problem becomes all the more complex. Again, the spiritual experience is found to change from one form into another, or transformed suddenly from one kind into another. Change and motion, like the change and motion of physical objects, appear to be the characteristics of spiritual experience as well. These then are the paramount questions, both for physics and philosophy: Is change real? Is motion real? Are they objective or subjective?

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[1] *Mysticism in Mahārāshtra*, p. 410.

Modern physics believes in relative motion and is of opinion that there is no absolute motion. Everything in the universe moves with reference to something else, which also is in motion. The sun, the moon and the stars move with reference to the ether or the space through which they travel; but the ether too, which is now replaced by another concept, *viz.*, the 'electro-magnetic field,' has its own movement and is not steady. That everything is in motion (though relatively), and nothing is at rest appears to be the verdict of modern science; and that eternal change is the aspect of the real would be the corresponding verdict in the philosophy of Heracleitus and Bergson. The question for us is: is the object of spiritual experience endowed inevitably with the relative motion of modern physics or the Bergsonian change? Or can we challenge the truth of these stupendous verdicts and assert the old belief of something permanent with reference to which motions of other things are explained? Are we to believe with Aristotle in an 'unmoved mover' of the universe, or in an eternally moving and changing universe without the 'unmoved' mover? Or, may we hope to reconcile these apparent contradictions in an experience which is at once the inexhaustible, permanent source as well as the continuously changing stream?

Two considerations will, we think, decide unambiguously and unhesitatingly this question in the manner of the third alternative suggested above. We have to note, first, the relation that exists between the subject and the object of spiritual experience, and secondly, the growth which takes place in this experience. The subject-object relation of spiritual experience is a peculiar one. It is not that the subject with some characteristics of its own is pitted against an object with some other characteristics. The subject becomes its own object and knows it; to say it in the fashion of Kantian terminology, the object is nothing but the spiritual counterpart or the analogue of the subject, a simple projection of it. That is why the physical object is seen only in the place where it exists and not in any other place where it is not. A particular book in the shelf in front of me will be in that position and place unless it is disturbed. It will be in a particular direction with reference to me and will continue to be so unless I myself change the place I am now occupying. With the slightest change in my position or in the physical object, *e.g.*, the book, there will be a change in the cognition of it. The spiritual object, on the other hand, (supposing it is seen where the book was, and myself being in my former seat) can be seen in an identical, unchanged form anywhere on the line, drawn between the points indicating the place of the book and my seat. Whether the distance is cut short or increased, the mystical object will never be out of focus and so become dim or blurred. It remains as it was in its original glory at any point between myself in the chair and the shelf there at a distance. There may be no change in it, if I myself move forward or backward. With myself as stationary, and with a constant distance between myself and the object, I can have only one unaltered view of the physical object; but even if I rotate round myself, and even if the distance between myself and the spiritual object changes, I can have the same experience of it at any point on the circumference. In other words, I may view the spiritual object at any point in space in an unaltered identical manner.

In short, our conclusion, so far as the cognition of the spiritual object is concerned, is this: with alteration in the position in space of the subject, there may be no alteration of position in space of the object; and with no alterations in position in space of the subject, there may be any alteration of position in space of the object. In other words, the object may appear to move from place to place, even when the subject does not; or the object may not move at all, though the subject may. Or both of them may move; or both of them may remain fixed and steady in an act of deep and absorbed contemplation.

Change and motion, then, are not incompatible with spiritual experience, though they cannot be said to be the necessary characteristic marks of Reality. If we however take into consideration the fact of growth in spiritual experience, we must, inspite of this metaphysical fact, say that they are essentially bound up with the life of devotion. When the Divine Form, as Rāmadāsa tells us, increases from that which resembles a smallest particle (aṇu) to that which envelopes the universe, he is telling us not a metaphysical theory, but an experience which evolves and undergoes a perpetual change. The object of spiritual experience thus points out, on the one hand, the Absolute Reality which is beyond all change and motion, and on the other, a life of a finite being which, because of its growing experience, is essentially one of change and motion.

Experience being both the material and the test of Reality, the object of spiritual experience can be found to stand a number of tests to which no non-spiritual object in this world (*i.e.* the physical, the psychical etc.) will ever stand. It will be seen on fire, but instead of being burnt will be seen in the same place, after the fire is extinguished. It will be seen on the floods and will not be moistened or swept away by them. It will stand stead-fast even though the swiftest winds blow over it. It will penetrate the adamant, and yet will not be penetrated or cut by the sharpest of instruments or weapons. It will take its place inside the eyelids and yet will not harm the eye on account of its extreme softness. Seen through the microscope or the telescope, it will retain its form and size without the slightest change. Appearing as if reflected on a bright surface, it will never be reflected; for it would then be determined by the sensuous things. A white flower will appear red when looked at through a red piece of glass; the object of mystical experience will never be affected by the qualities of the sensuous world. It will not be darkened by the smoke, sullied by the dirt, adorned by the flowers or illuminated by light. Nothing which does not stand these tests is real from the mystical point of view.

4. Visions, Voices etc. have ontological value

The greatest caution however is required to discriminate between false visions and voices and true ones. For they may be due to unhealthy cerebral activity, illusions, psycho-sensorial hallucinations, epilepsy, hysteria, subliminal consciousness, etc.

'Vision, then, is recognized by the true contemplative,' says Evelyn Underhill, 'as at best an imperfect, oblique, and untrustworthy method of apprehension; it is ungovernable, capricious, liable to deception, and the greater its accompanying hallucination the more suspicious it becomes.'[1] As visions and voices are parallel phenomena from the psychological point of view, an attempt has been made by E. Underhill to classify the visions into (1) Intellectual, (2) Imaginary, and (3) Corporeal, and the voices into (1) Substantial or inarticulate, (2) Interior and distinct, and (3) Exterior words. The articulate word, we are told, is inevitably subject to some degree of illusion, and the corporeal vision, to sensorial hallucination. The intellectual vision, like the inarticulate voice is undefinable, illusive and formless, though both of them are spiritually valuable. 'The imaginary vision', says Underhill, 'is the spontaneous and automatic activity of a power which all artists, all imaginative people, possess. There is little real difference except in degree between Wordsworth's imaginary vision of the 'dancing daffodils' and Suso's of the dancing angels, though in the first, the visionary is aware that the picture seen is supplied by memory, whilst in the second it arises spontaneously like a dream from the subliminal region.'[2] The voices which correspond to the imaginary visions are nothing but self-created locutions, or rearrangements of thought.

In view of the nature of spiritual experience which we have discussed so fully till now, we need not attempt to expose the hollowness and the misleading nature of such a classification of visions and voices. From the point of view of the saints of Mahārāshtra, the visions and voices are entirely the 'work of God.' There is no such thing as 'Internal' and 'External,' 'intellectual' and 'imaginary,' 'inarticulate' and 'sensorial' about them. They are not the externalization or materialization of any idea whether imagined or not. As such, no question of their being illusions or hallucinations would arise. As a matter of fact, they cannot even be said to be mental or psychical; they are purely ontological in essence and value. We do not understand why such a person as Prof. A.R. Wadia, who rightly understands the value of Indian thought as a whole, should suspect the ontological value of visions and voices. 'As psychical phenomena they have worth,' says Prof. Wadia, 'but whether they have ontological value is certainly open to question.'[1] The visions (and voices) stand the various tests of Reality, while illusions and hallucinations can hardly be said to stand any one of them. For a mystic they are the signs of the presence of God, unquestionably objective and coming from the unseen, transcendental world. As St. Teresa says, 'judging from the brightness in which He was pleased to show himself, it would be absurd to suppose that the one (a painted picture) bears any resemblance whatever to the other (the vision of Christ).'[2]

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[1] *Mysticism*, p. 281; also Part II Ch. V.

[2] *Mysticism*, p. 285.

Some visions and sounds are so intense, articulate, growing and permanent even in the waking life of the mystic, that they accompany him wherever he goes. 'You are my companion, wherever I go,' says Tukārāma, addressing the vision he sees. The fact, that sometimes visions and voices are simultaneously experienced and found to corroborate each other, is an additional proof of the objective validity of these experiences. St. Paul not only saw the vision, but also heard the voice simultaneously, saying unto him that the vision he had seen was from Christ alone. Jñāneśvara also saw the vision of Kṛṣṇa in the courtyard and simultaneously heard the voice of God. Just as there is the thunder and the lightning in the physical world, even so the voice and the vision are in the world spiritual.

They may have symbolic value and be useful to all types of creative genius; but their greatest value for spiritual purposes is shown by the fact that they sometimes arrive at the time of initiation, intervene between one spiritual state and another, and silence all indecisions by authoritative command or guidance. Real visions and voices may also be had in dreams. Even so musical sounds are as objectively real as voices and visions, and being the indications of Divine presence, are helpful to us in our meditation.

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[1] *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 365.

[2] Quoted by Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 288-89.

Ecstasy and rapture indicate contemplation at its highest pitch; and so, the riotous enjoyment of God, which is only possible in the condition of rapture, is really the apex of blessedness. The ego is almost completely abandoned; and though there is no conscious surrender of the finite will to the Divine will, the way is paved for it. As they enhance the vitality, joy and health of the mind, and as they have absolutely no depressing effect, they cannot be compared with epileptic fits, hysteria, sleep, intoxicated condition or the condition after a 'hot-bath,' as Leuba wishes to put it.

12

The Spirit Manifests in Man

A. As Effects of God-realization

THE REALIZATION of God being the highest pursuit of man's life, it is very necessary to have certain criteria by which we shall be able to judge whether a particular man has or has not realized God in his life. And meditation on the Name of God being the only means to realize God, it is also worthwhile to note the effects of a continued ceaseless meditation. At the outset, however, we must bear in mind two things regarding the nature of spiritual life. One is that the spiritual life is capable of being shared by us all in degrees, and therefore to the degree to which a person stands the test of the criteria he can be said to have appropriated the life of the Spirit. There being this constant approximation to God-hood, and no finality of it in the life of a man, we shall note that the criteria too must, in the first place, be such as will be able to evaluate the various mystics in the search for reality. The criteria we are going to suggest will, in the first place, distinguish those who have realized God at least to a certain extent from those who have not. And secondly, they will give us a standard or norm by which we shall be able to fix the position of the various types of mystics in the scale of Being. For example, a poet may be found to possess certain marks possessed by a real mystic, and yet he will be no more than a poet. It will be erroneous to call him a mystic, if he is found wanting in the essential characteristics of the mystic. Similarly, it will be erroneous to call a man of high moral sense as a mystic, because a mystic is necessarily highly moral. So the criteria will also help us in distinguishing a real mystic from a pseudo-mystic or a simulating mystic, between one who in spite of other qualifications is a God-realizer first and one who is inferred (and very often wrongly) to be a God-realizer because he has in common some unessential other qualities; in short, between the essentially spiritual life and the mere life of imagination or intellect or good will or emotion.

Another feature of spiritual life we must note before proceeding to the delineation of the criteria is that the spiritual life consists in the silent enjoyment of God, and as such is ineffable, incommunicable and in a sense personal. We must accordingly have a distinction between the criteria as internal and as external. So far as the mystic himself is concerned, both the types will be useful to him; but for others, who must be content with the observation of the mystic's behaviour, the external criteria alone will be available. But here, as suggested above, there is the danger of a behaviourist confusing a mystic with a non-mystic, on account of the external behaviour being sometimes common to both. The supreme criterion must be internal; and so in spiritual life, as in moral life according to Aristotle, the individual conscience alone will be the final judge of the progress that is achieved.

In this section, we shall deal mainly with the immediate effects or signs of realization; we shall deal in the next with the actual mode of behaviour of a person who has realised God.

It is worth noting that a full-fledged mystic has, in spite of these criteria, a power to apprehend another mystic of his kind. As Tukārāma tells us, a saint alone knows the secret of another saint. We may simply remark that this transcendental power of knowing another of his type without the use of the criteria is probably the result of a constant, unitive life with God. Rāmadāsa has put this very succinctly when, after equating Jñāna and Upāsanā, he says negatively that God cannot be known by any one who does not become God. We have only to extend this argument and say that just as to know God one has to become God, to know a mystic, one has to become a mystic.

Leaving aside however this question of the transcendental power of finding out a mystic by another mystic, let us be content with the finding and the discussion of the external and the internal criteria. To begin with the Psycho-physical criterion, *viz.*, the perfect indifference to the body and the bodily pleasures : As the body consists of the five elements and as the elements are due to Māyā, the mystic has never his eye on what happens to the body. Not that he does not take care of the body, or that he inflicts pain on himself by unnecessary mortification of the flesh, but he does not feel that his being consists of the material or physical self. Whether the body is fit or diseased, covered or naked, he is ever prepared to use it for the service of God. He knows that a sound body will be more fitted to do the service of God than a weak and diseased one; he may try his best to keep it fit; but, if unfortunately he finds the opposite, he does not regret it. Mustering courage on the contrary, he makes it deliberately fit for the cause of God. Come what may, this preparedness to use the body through thick and thin, through hunger, sickness, disease, pain, and all sorts of miseries for the Divine cause, constitutes the physical and the mental criterion of a person who has realized God. When Tukārāma says, 'Let the body be torn in pieces, let the head be cut off, one must not give up the Name of God,' he is exhibiting this utter indifference to the body. Almost all great mystics have shown this capacity and willingness to suffer in body.

This indifference to the body and whatever pertains to the body is possible in two ways: one, as a preparation for the Divine life; the other, as the result of it. There is naturally more of joy, ease, and confidence in the indifference shown to the body, when it is the result of an experience of God and of His grace than when it is accepted deliberately by the aspirant, as the first step on the path of God. This joyful, natural indifference to the hedonistic values of life is the test of the presence of a higher life. The more the life of the Ātman, the less the life of the body; the greater the joy of the Ātmanic life, the greater the indifference to the flesh.

Natural control over the senses and the mind, and the easy overcoming of the temptations is the next criterion of a person who has found peace in God. By 'control' is not meant the ruthless suppression, but the calming down of the exuberance of the passions, by means of the contemplation of God. The mind cannot attend for a long time to two objects with equal zeal. It must choose one of the two, God or passions; and if God be the only object of the mind, then naturally, the objects of the senses will lose their grip on the mind. Like the body, they too will be treated with indifference, and some of them even with contempt

A contact with the mystical object is bound to affect one emotionally. This occurs especially in the case of a novice, when he is attracted and filled with awe at the sight of the mystical vision, or when he hears the mystical sounds. The emotional stuff of the mind is churned, as it were, by the spiritual exercise of meditation on the Name of God, and so there is a complete and constant, and sometimes, violent shuffling and reshuffling of the emotions. That which is uppermost goes down to the bottom of the mind, and vice versa. Just as a stone thrown in water is the cause, not only of surface ripples, but also of the mud that is brought from the bottom to the surface, even so, the mind of the novice becomes sometimes full of evil and wicked thoughts, as if it is the result of meditation. But the Name of God has not only this negative function; it has the positive, curative function also. No doubt, it exposes the evil to the light by dragging it out of the deep recesses of the heart; but it does not allow the evil to lie there on the surface of the mind, either to disturb the Sādhaka by its presence or to be expressed into action, as the psycho-analysts wish us to do. The Name of God has the peculiar power of transforming evil into good. It does not make the dirt go down once again to the bottom of the mind, but transfigures it altogether into clean material.

Emergence of pure and refined emotions out of the dirty and the gross is, therefore, a great sign of God-realization and of a continuous practice of meditation. The Tāmasa qualities are being transformed into the Rājasa, the Rājasa into the Sāttvika; and the Sāttvika again into those which are Supra-Sāttvika. The love felt for a concubine may be transformed into love for one's own wife; the love for wife into that for mother; and again, the love for mother into the love for God. Man gains spiritual energy by meditation on the Name; but he also becomes in the beginning of his career extremely susceptible to the shocks of emotions. His whole emotional being is churned by the spiritual energy; and it is just possible that vulgar emotions may come to the surface of the mind, and the Sādhaka may succumb to them. The great art of spiritual alchemy, whereby the transformation of emotions takes place, consists in a sincere, ardent longing for the grace of God, and a ceaseless meditation on His name. When the mind becomes full of tender and noble emotions, when the entire life is gradually being trained to be utilized for the service of God, and when there arises the mystical experience as the result of intense meditation, the Sādhaka experiences one or more of what are known as the eight Sāttvika conditions of the body and the mind. They are, as the saints tell us, hair standing on end, perspiration, tremor, tears, joy, choking of the throat, the mystical silence, and long inspirations and expirations. Though these Aṣṭa Bhāvas are the results of meditation and God-realization, they are, in a way, further useful in being the very conditions of spiritual progress. We cannot resist the temptation of quoting Tukārāma who is at his best in describing the effects of meditation and God-realization. 'When I utter Thy Name, my mind becomes composed. The tongue enjoys a stream of ambrosia. Good omens of all kinds take place. The mind is coloured in Thy vision, and becomes steady on Thy feet Desires come to an end, and words come out of the mouth as of complete satisfaction. Happiness meets happiness, and there is no limit to blessedness. The evil passions are conquered : all the impulses are nipped in the bud by the power of the Name. Blessed is his body who utters the Name of God. It is itself a place of pilgrimage. By meditation on God all difficulties will vanish. Even the disease of life will vanish, not to speak of other smaller diseases. One will even be able to confer spiritual obligations upon others by uttering God's Name. The tongue soon gets averse to other kinds of flavours; but the flavour of the Name increases every moment.'[1]

The mystic alone, as a matter of fact, is his own judge to see how far he has progressed by reference to the spiritual signs mentioned above. The bee alone can appreciate the honey; but the sweetness must be tasted and not imagined. That is why

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[1] *Mysticism in Mahārāshtra*, pp. 320-321.

Rāmadāsa tells us that 'only then can a man be supposed to have reached the end of spiritual life, when he has personally known that all his sins have come to an end; when he has known that the round of births and deaths has come to a stop; when he has known both God and Self, and when he has experienced the extreme surrender to self of God, and when he comes to know who the All-doer is.'[1]

B. As an Ideal Saint

An enigma to the people of the world, the saint is known to the persons of his type. He is a puzzle, not because eccentricity is the essence of his life, but because the ordinary common standards of judging behaviour fall short in his case. He appears eccentric, queer, or even a lunatic or a mad man, as Mukundarāja or Tukārāma would put it; but this lunacy, madness or eccentricity is nothing but the index of the unique and extraordinary nature of the saint. which makes him always appear as head and shoulders above the common folk. As a matter of fact, he belongs to the Divine world, and is merely a sojourner in this world of men; he lives in the world, though he is not of the world. Like Plato's ideal man or the philosopher, he has his eye and interest, not so much on the objects of the senses, as on the transcendental vision or Idea.

A man of the world, being just the opposite of the saint, has all his interests in the sensuous objects, and hardly any in the Divine world. Naturally, he is unable to understand the saints in the proper light, and so judges them wrongly. We very often find that the objects which interest a man of commonsense do not interest a saint, that the joys and pleasures of the world are set at nought by him, and that, in short, the very standards which measure human worth and conduct, are found insufficient in his case. Not knowing the hidden treasure of Divine knowledge which the saint possesses, not knowing the reasons why his behaviour is inconsistent with the behaviour of the people of the world, the ordinary man hastily gives the erroneous verdict that the saint is an enigma or an eccentric personality. As a matter of fact, it is the man of the world himself who, having given himself wholly to the pursuit of the pleasures of the senses, has fallen away from the true centre of a life in God, and has described for himself a very different but limited circle of the sensuous life. Enigmatic or eccentric though it appears, let us see if we can first explain and justify the behaviour of a saint, and then make his saintliness the only standard of conduct for us all to accept.

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[1] *Mysticism in Mahārāshtra*, p. 409.

The first and the foremost characteristic of a saint is that he finds abiding life and supreme peace in the life of the Ātman. As we have it in the Bhagavadgītā, he sports with the Ātman, lives in the Ātman and is pleased with the life in the Ātman (3.17). As a result of this he becomes inevitably endowed with other characteristics. Always looking at the vision of the Self and meditating on the Name of God, he forgets the world and his body, and is absolutely free from the cares and anxieties about them. His body may move; yet his mind has become steadfast in God. The sole desire that he cherishes is to meditate ceaselessly on God and have a look at God; consequently, other desires forsake him. We become angry when we lose something, or do not get it even if we try; the saint never loses his spiritual treasure, and so has no cause to be angry. The vision of the Self being non-dual, he has no jealousy or quarrel with anybody; neither has he any cause for mourning or for having any temptation. The whole universe being filled with God, he is, so to say, in his own house, wherever he goes. He has truly become immortal by identification with God; what is there then of which he should be afraid? Not even of death. By the loss of consciousness that he is the body, he has, as it were, spread himself as wide as the sky. Just as the sky is not a hindrance to anybody, he too is soft and kind to all by his speech and actions. He is as good and holy as God, and is beyond the dualities of pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, opulence and poverty, etc. He is the incarnation of dispassion and has absolutely no desires.

Absolute dispassion or desirelessness, fearlessness, and equanimity, and the attitude of spiritual indifference to the joys and miseries of the world are then the prominent characteristics that arise from the Ātmanic life and constant meditation on God. The quality of dispassion or desirelessness is not the mark of incapacity to enjoy, or of weakness, or effeminacy; neither is it a reaction of voluptuous indulgence in the pleasures of the senses. In spite of perfect physical capacity to enjoy, passionlessness for the pleasures of life arises as the natural outcome of a life steadfast in God, the contentment of which does not depend on a prior want. Besides, the dispassion observed in a saint is not of the same quality as perforce exhibited by a spiritual aspirant. The aspirant exercises a sort of control over his desires, in order to make meditation and Divine life at all possible; in a way, he runs away from the temptations and the passions that are likely to mislead him. In the case of the saint, on the other hand, the passions and temptations themselves may be said to be running away from him. Or just as the waters of the rivers lose all their violent force and speed when they meet the sea, similarly the passions and temptations in life lose all their sting when they touch the saint. There is no doubt, some sense in saying, as the upholders of the New Psychology would like to say, that the suppressed emotions of the sādhaka, inasmuch as they are not properly expressed, lie waiting in the ante-chamber of the mind and that, when the proper moment arises, they rush forth and explode by way of reaction. But these psychologists do not know that whatever is suppressed on account of its being unhealthy and uncongenial for the growth of spiritual life is further burnt by the fire of meditation, and that whatever is healthy and fit to grow from the spiritual point of view, is actually grown and reaped into a harvest by the power of devotion, prayer and grace of God. This process of destruction and construction, of purification and illumination, goes on repeatedly, till the sādhaka is transformed into Siddha. In his attempt to identify himself with God, the saint goes so far beyond the threshold of mind, that the language of an 'ante-chamber' or a 'fore-chamber' becomes thoroughly inadequate. What can 'control' achieve for him now? It is not required of him now to cast off any desire, or passion or emotion. Any desire other than the desire for God will be put into the fire of devotion and meditation, and will be immediately transfigured into the Love of God.

Fearlessness is a quality that arises on account of the persistent contact with the Ātman; for the Ātman is the Fear of all fearful objects. The natural elements are fearful enough, though Death is the most fearful of all. The saint, who has lost every vestige of bodily consciousness on account of his complete identification with the immaculate Self or the Ātman, is not afraid of death at all. Being convinced that the Ātman will never perish and that the body is to perish some day or other, he is always prepared to lose his mortal coil, though fearlessness of death is compatible with the care which the saint may take to keep his body fit for the service of God. He knows the value of his body only as an instrument; and so, he does not make the slightest fetish about it.

It may be said that a martyr or a hero is equally fearless of death, and that fearlessness is not a quality peculiar to the saint. To a certain extent this is true; but the motives in the two cases are entirely different. Death to the martyr and the hero is a means to prove the martyrdom or heroism; to the saint, death is neither a means nor an end but an accident, to meet which he is ever prepared. To others, it may appear as a means that will prosper his cause or as a justification of it. The death of Jesus may be justified as the last great event of the life of a martyr, which made the spread of Christianity possible. We are not concerned with what people may think about his death, but with the motive of Jesus himself in accepting the death which was thrust upon him. It must not be so much to spread the Christian religion after his death. He chose to die because he was convinced that it was the will of God, and that the only duty he had to do was calmly to surrender to it. To the saint, death is an event to which he looks with perfect indifference. Whether it is the death of his own body or the death and destruction of others and of the perishable things, he is ever prepared for it, because he has his heart fixed on the only imperishable thing *viz.*, the Ātman.

It is this quality of fearlessness which is also manifested as boldness and courage in the saint. When ordinary men are cowed down by trying circumstances and perplexities in life, the saints gain in strength and rise superior to them. The spirit in them always conquers or tries to conquer the flesh. It never yields. In the moral and the spiritual fields their undaunted courage knows no bounds. With truthfulness as their spear, and faith in God as their shield, they fight to the bitter end and very often become victorious. And even if they lose, they lose in the name of God and still are brave.

The calamities and the perplexities in life are the occasions by which their saintly character is tested; as such, they show the greatest courage and forbearance with the world. Even an ordinary man shows courage and strength of will in order to prove his reputation and credit in society. A greater courage is required in conforming to moral ideals, especially when no reputation and credit are at stake. A man is all the more morally great when he behaves according to his moral convictions, notwithstanding his knowledge that he would be rewarded with the censure of society and of friends with whom he moves, and that he would suffer a great material loss. The greatest courage however is required on the part of the saint who joyfully withstands any difficulty that comes in his way to God. He derives his fearlessness and courage from his meditation on God, and uses it again for his moral and spiritual progress, and not for any immoral or anti-social purpose.

As this quality of fearlessness is ultimately rooted in righteousness and devotion, and as it grows along with spiritual experience and grace of God, the devotee or the true saint has no reason even to become afraid of God. 'Why should a true servant be afraid of his master?' asks Tukārāma. The true servant reserves nothing for himself, but dedicates everything to his Lord. And then as a reward for his most faithful service, he receives in his hand the keys of all the spiritual treasures and the Powers of God; and yet, whenever there arises an occasion in his life when he should use the powers for his own personal sake, he sacrifices his self rather than use the powers and save it. His self-surrender is so complete that on all occasions he joyfully submits to the will of God. When such is the relation between the servant and the Master, obviously the ties which bind them together are of love and not of fear. When God speaks and offers boons, the devotee says, 'not the boons but Thyself, I want, my Lord,' or as Rāmadāsa would put it, he asks of Rāma, 'to transform him into Rāma.' Mystically speaking, when the saint has the vision of the Self, who should fear whom?

This mystical experience involves, no doubt, the element of fear and awe, as we have noticed in an earlier chapter. But the fear on further analysis will be found to be due to the ignorance that makes the mystical object appear as something 'other,' or as having the sense of 'beyond' attached to it. Indeed, in a sense, the mystical object will perpetually remain as the 'other,' since the finite can never become the Infinite, as long as it is embodied. And yet, in moments of ecstasy, the difference between the subject and the object is not felt; for, there is no bodily consciousness. The subject sees itself as the object, and is irresistibly drawn towards it. This drawing together of the two in the unitive life may be spoken of as 'love' in which are cancelled fear and ignorance. The saint and God, to return to our point, mutually love each other; and it may be said therefore that the original spiritual fear too dies or dissolves into the growing love of the life of unity. It is significant to note in this connection that Arjuna, who was extremely terrified at the sight of the Universal Ātman was reprimanded by Kṛṣṇa for lack of courage. 'Thou are ignorant of the great boon that I have conferred on thee by showing thee this vision,' said Kṛṣṇa, 'and thou art prattling like a terror-stricken man. This infinite form of mine, from which all incarnations emanate, has never been hitherto heard or seen by anybody except thee. Thou hast come upon an ocean of nectar, and art afraid of being drowned in it. Even though this form might be terrific to look at, pin thy faith to this. Thou art afraid because thou hast never seen this form before; but forget not to exchange love for fear.'[1] Rāmadāsa also, while speaking of the various mystical sounds, says, 'It makes one afraid greatly;' but in his verses addressed to mind, he tells us that the infinite God is beyond all fear.

So, the tie that binds the saint and God in the supreme act of 'Advaitic' devotion or the unitive life is of love. It does not, however, connote a cheap form of sentimentalism that ordinarily obtains between man and man, nor a sort of fashionable, vague feeling of universal brotherhood and fellowship, nor again the sexual attraction that unfortunately goes by the same name. The love of a mystic that unites him with the God-head so far transcends these crude or perverse forms of it that there is nothing in common between them except the name, as Spinoza says in another context that there is nothing in common between the constellation known as dog and the animal that barks. The Divine love is the unconquerable passion which grows stronger and stronger by eating up all other emotions, including even the spiritual fear; it is the support and the culmination of all the emotions, and is therefore capable of giving rise to them all. It is on this account that the saint too, like God, is at once an object of fear and love, of awe and reverence. Himself being fearless and full of love, he is an object of fear and love to others. To fear and love him is to fear and love God, and to learn to conquer fear by love.

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[1] *Mysticism in Māhārāshtra*, p. 68.

Equanimity is one of the greatest spiritual characteristics that emerge out of the supramental condition of the saint. When in the moments of ecstatic contemplation of God, the saint transcends the consciousness of body, mind, egoism and intellect, it is but natural that he equally turns a deaf ear to the praise and censure of the people. This does not mean that he is dull to understand the difference between the two. If there be anyone who would quickly understand the minutest differences in the meanings of words, it is the saint. Nor does it mean that like an aspirant he makes an effort to go beyond the dualities. What happens is that, like the Absolute, he too literally goes beyond the range of the dualities. From the point of view of the Absolute, the Ātman or the saint who tries to approximate to Him, the dualities are equally unreal, and so do not gain any point of contact with any one of them. To throw flowers at the Sun or to spit at him are, indeed, fundamentally two different things from the point of view of the attitude of reverence or otherwise, but are equally irrelevant and absurd from the point of view of the Sun who is beyond the reach of these things. The saint being the Sun of Reality is never touched by the various dualities in life, such as pleasures and pains, honour and dishonour, and the like. Being shut up on all sides by the vision of the Self, nothing which is other than this vision has the power to eclipse the vision and disturb his mind.

The beautiful form of a woman, for example, is incapable of attracting the saint, for he has his eye on the vision of God, which comes in front of that beautiful form. While discussing the nature of the mystical object, we have noted that if a paper be held between the eye and the mountain on which the vision is presumed to have been seen, the perception of the mountain is intercepted, but not the vision of God. Curiously, the vision of God is seen on the paper, as it was previously seen on the mountain. Nothing which is sensuous in nature has got the capacity to eclipse the vision of God; rather the vision of God envelopes everything else. The form of the beautiful woman therefore is itself covered by the vision of God. The saint sees God first and the woman afterwards; the beauty of the flesh pales into insignificance before the beauty of the Divine form, and loses its painful sting of lust. He sees the Divine form on ugly things also, and so they do not create any shudder or repulsion in him. Though keen to appreciate the difference between beauty and ugliness, in the presence of God, he is not affected by the reactions of either of them. If, however, he finds that an ugly body hides in it a beautiful soul, and that a beautiful body hides in it an ugly one, he will be more attracted by the former than by the latter. He thus transcends the surface ugliness and beauty, because he has his eye on the Divine beauty. Both the surface ugliness and beauty are unreal in the sense that both of them lack the moral and the spiritual values in them. That is why the saint is equally indifferent to both of them, and is pleased only with the contemplation of the beauty of God alone.

As opposed to this view of the equanimity and indifference of the saints in the Mahārāshtra towards the beauty of the skin, we have only to cite, by way of contrast, what some of the poet-mystics in the West think and feel about human and natural beauty. As Caroline E. Spurgeon points out, 'Beauty.... the beauty of the face of a woman, is for Rossetti the actual and visible symbol of love.' And again, 'for Patmore,' says Spurgeon, 'it is in human love, but above all in wedded love, we have a symbol of the love between God and the Soul.' As Patmore says in 'The Angel in the House' (Book II, prelude II), 'and in the arithmetic of life, the smallest unit is a pair.'[1] Now, it is one thing to become enamoured of the beauty of the face of a woman and ardently to hanker after wedded love, and another thing to equate this beauty and love to Divine beauty and the love between God and man. Rossetti and Patmore appear to have been aware of only one thing, namely, the appreciation of human beauty and human love. The saint is aware of both, the human and the Divine love and beauty.

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[1] *Mysticism in English Literature*, pp. 47-49.

The poet is aware of the one alone, and so makes the fallacy of deifying and immortalizing the same in imagination, while the mystic is aware of both and so makes the difference between the two. However poetic and imaginative the idealization of human love and beauty may be, the mystic instantaneously visualizes the decay of it, and inasmuch as he has the direct experience of the Divine love and beauty, he will never confuse the human and the Divine.

The argument does not improve, even if it be said that the human love and beauty are symbols or aspects of the Divine love and beauty. As Plato says, they may at best suggest to us the incomparably sublime love and beauty of God; but nothing that is sensuous and sensual can ever be truly considered as a symbol or aspect of the non-sensuous or the spiritual in nature. The experience of the beauty and love of God is possible only by the way of meditation on God; no amount of heightening, without such meditation, of the human love and beauty will make it possible. A mystic who has seen a beautiful form of God may be reminded of it by seeing the very beautiful face of a woman; but one who has had no vision of God can hardly say that He is beautiful like a beautiful woman. Similarly, a mystic who has the experience of ecstasy, rapture and grace of God may, with some excuse, use as illustration and by way of remote analogy for the intellectual understanding of others the wedded love as a symbol of the love of God; but it would be a travesty of facts for one who has had no such experience to suggest that the two types of love are of the same kind. As Bergson suggests in his 'Two Sources of Morality and Religion,' the word 'love' which is indiscriminately used by poets and novelists has been first borrowed from the vocabulary of the mystics. The love that the mystic feels for God, and God feels for the mystic, is an undying bond, while the beauty of God is an undying experience.

We may note in this connection that unlike the nature-poets, the saint is a pan-*theist*, with stress on the word, 'Theos'. The poet too is known as a mystic of the pantheistic type, but generally he lays the stress on the word '*pan*' and not on 'Theos.' The poet becomes aware of the things of this world first, and then of the fact that it is, to use the words of William Wordsworth, 'informed with the spirit of God.' According to

Rāmadāsa, the saint who has seen the source of the great river of life by swimming against the current has become one with the Transcendent Reality; to him the whole of the perceptible world is nothing but a dream. The world as denoted by the word 'pan' loses itself so completely in the Theos that only the Theos remains. And in the mystical quest the Theos too is no longer as something 'other' but the Self of the saint as being realized. Naturally, only after the realization of God and not before, can it be truly said that the whole world is lit up with the glory of God. As Thomas Traherne says, 'You never enjoy the world aright, till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars, till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world. The world is a mirror of infinite beauty; yet no man sees it. It is a temple of majesty, yet no man regards it. It is a region of Light and Peace.'[1]

Here, too, the confusion is made by those who are poets only. They become aware of the beauty of Nature, and say that it appears as the beauty of God. It was Socrates who had said long ago that the trees and the outside Nature cannot teach us anything regarding our own nature. No amount of appreciation of natural beauty will give you awareness of the Divine beauty. It may arouse in you the sense of sublimity and grandeur as it did in Kant and led him to believe in a Being that was responsible for it. The saint may not go this way and may not philosophize at all; and yet he will be directly able to experience that God is beautiful, and as the mantle of His beauty falls on Nature, experience afterwards that Nature too is beautiful.

Contradictions are, as we have seen, the necessary moments in the life of the Absolute Being. Faithfully, though approximately, mirroring this life, the ideal saint too presents apparent contradictions in his behaviour which unfortunately irritates the man of commonsense and consistency. Like Aristotle's God, he himself remains 'unmoved, but moves the world.' As Rāmadāsa points out, he lives in the mountains and caves and cares for the good of the world; lives in the world, and yet does not belong to it; lives in the company of the saints as also of the people of the world and holds conversations with them, but never breaks his silence or solitude. He may be garrulous but is always free from untruth; though looking shy and feeble, he is a tower of strength and courage; possesses childlike simplicity along with most mature wisdom and shrewdness; looks like a madman, and yet is most consistent in thought, speech and actions. He is extremely mild on account of compassion and love, but extremely harsh and severe against the arrogant and the wicked. As Tukārāma says, the saint will give away even the loin-cloth from his body, but will strike a rod on the head of a wicked person, if occasion arises. Though he is indifferent to the joys and the miseries of the world, so far as he himself is concerned, he is the first man who becomes pained by the sufferings of others, and finds happiness in their happiness. He takes the utmost care to see that he does not receive any obligations from others, but himself behaves with the conviction that the mission of his life is to do spiritual good unto others. He does not allow others to imagine his condition, though he penetrates into the minds of others. Knowing that there is a difference between the devotee and God, just as there is a difference between the full moon and the moon of the previous day, he always behaves as an humble servant of God; and therefore he does not ask for anything but remains content with whatever is given to him by God.

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[1] Quoted by E. Herman, *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism*, p. 209.

It is sometimes said that the person who has gone beyond the domain of the qualities is not bound by any kind of positive or negative rules. He may behave, it is contended, in any way he likes, and that the question of morality and immorality is irrelevant from the point of view of the Ātmanic life. As already observed twice, we have again to point out that there will be substantially no spiritual progress without the support of moral life, just as there would be no progress of moral life and no perfection in it without spiritual progress. The saint, therefore, can never be indifferent to the accepted moral code of his society, though, in a way, he lives a life which goes beyond both morality and immorality. True, in a way, the moral and the immoral life are both unreal when compared with the spiritual life; but the degree of unreality of an immoral life is infinitely greater than that of the moral life. That three plus two make four is, no doubt, a false proposition, and that three plus thirteen make four is just another false proposition. But because both are false, it does not follow that both the propositions are equally false; the degree of falsity of the second proposition is far greater than that of the first. Obviously, the saint will avoid the immoral path and stick to the path of morality, because, in the first place, that makes the spiritual progress possible; secondly because, morality itself is a necessary manifestation of the spiritual life; and that thirdly, the life of the saint serves as an example for the ordinary people. Those who want deliberately to lead an immoral life under the guise of spiritual activity commit the sin of misleading the people and of putting a stop to the life spiritual.

There has been much dispute regarding the superiority or otherwise of the contemplative mystic over the activistic one. This is altogether an idle question, the futility of which has been shown by Prof. Ranade, according to whom there is a temperamental difference between one mystic and another. Contemplation and activity are not incompatible with each other; the fact is that some one is more contemplative than active, another more active than contemplative. Contemplation itself is the most intense activity of the spiritual kind. Therefore those who oppose the contemplative type to the activistic one, and suggest by way of implication that the contemplative is a mere visionary, a recluse, or an inactive, passive spectator, look only at the superficial, external side of the mystical life. Those who are capable of appreciating it look to the internal side of the mystical life, and therefore find absolutely no contradiction between contemplation and activity. In an ideal saint, as Rāmadāsa says, contemplation and activity are beautifully combined; and so he advises us, as a preliminary step, to achieve this happy combination to lead a life in which they alternate with each other.

If realization of God is the highest and the main purpose of human life, and if meditation on God's Name is the only means of achieving it, any other activity which is not supported by the active life of meditation, or which does not lead to increase the spiritual life, is, as the saints consider, unworthy of being resorted to. There is nothing greater than God, as Rāmadāsa says. Therefore the saint considers that the greatest sin of which a man is capable is to forget the Name of God. After repeating the Name of God for seven years Abu Sayad says, "At last, every atom of me began to cry aloud 'Allah !' 'Allah !' 'Allah!' "[1] Why seven years? Seventy-seven years, nay the whole span of life must be given to the meditation on the Name of God. It is this ceaseless meditation that constitutes real Puṇya (merit), which has the power to make God manifest himself constantly before our eyes and other sense-organs, in all possible ways of Form, Beauty, Glory, Power, etc. It was the acquisition of this Puṇya that made, as the story goes, the bones of the dead body of Gorā Kumbhāra reverberate the Name of Viṭṭhala. How is it possible that such a full-fledged mystic should be contaminated by Godless activities ? He is perfectly Āptakāma; he is the Saguṇa Brahman from whom doubts and actions fall away automatically. And yet whatever he does, he does it as the work of God. If there be anybody who should be designated as Niṣkāma Karma-Yogī, it is the mystic alone and none else; for he has dedicated everything to God and has nothing to ask from Him, except the boon that his meditation on the Name of God should not cease on any account.

Verily, such a saint is God incarnate, an Avatāra; he alone can say to the world that they should leave all and follow him, if they wish to realize God. It matters very little who is the particular saint we follow; for though divers saints look different physically, they are one spiritually. To worship one of them is to worship them all. Let us then be either Jñāneśvara-centric or Rāmadāsa-centric, Christo-centric or Pauline-centric, if at all we wish to follow and experience the secrets of spiritual life.

As there is no finality to spiritual progress, there will be lifelong struggle of the finite to assimilate itself with the Infinite. Rare is the man who has gone beyond to the other side of the stream of life. God can never be known in His entirety. He is infinite, and man can only hope to realize a very small portion of this Infinite Mystical Reality.

The struggle includes the fear of relapse into sensual or immoral life as also the anxiety to maintain and enhance the moral and the spiritual progress. The struggle is all the more severe for the devotee; God tests him and as there are many pit-falls such as dissipation, sexual passion, desire for wealth and power, fickleness, doubt and unbelief, there occur reverses in the spiritual journey.

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[1] R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, p. 9.

As the result of disappointments, reverses, lapses, and the state of being deserted both by God and friends and relatives, there comes the second Dark Night of the Soul which is darker than the first. Prayer and grace alone will save the devotee out of it. The first night comes before illumination and conversion; it indicates mere helplessness and ignorance. The second comes after illumination and is all the more dreadful because the devotee, though he now knows the path of God and is not so helpless as he was before, yet feels that he is unable both to avoid the pit-falls and to make the progress. The struggle by itself is however extremely valuable. It is its own fruit. The Spirit ultimately gains the victory over the flesh.

The moment there is complete surrender of the finite will and the acceptance of the Divine will there will be an end to all doubts and misery.

13

The Karma of a Saint Culminates in Jnana[1]

1. *Sevenfold stream of spiritual life*

PROFESSOR R.D. Ranade it was who said for the first time, I think, that Jñāna is 'a process, and not an event', and thereby dismissed the conception of 'Jñānottara Karma.' that is, the conception of doing actions after one has gone to the end of Jñāna, as erroneous. I think that the whole of the spiritual life also is a continuous process, a stream made up of seven currents, none of which we can eliminate without crippling the growth of that life itself. Some of these currents are visible to the eye, some understandable and discernible by the intellect, and some are to be presumed as necessary, though, in the end, they too will be discovered as existing throughout the spiritual life on account of intuitive experience. Like the colours of the rainbow, these currents also pass imperceptibly into other currents; and then it becomes very difficult to say at what point one loses its exclusive and independent characteristics and participates in those of others. Ultimately, there will come a stage in the development of spiritual life when all its aspects will shed their gross and visible features and mingle with each other so inextricably that all of them will make one indivisible Jñāna-

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[1] This and the next chapter form the two lectures which were delivered by the author in December 1971 under the auspices of the University of Poona, as the Gurudeva R.D. Ranade Memorial Lectures.

Gangā. Thus it will be only our short sight or enthusiasm which will make us declare that one or the other of these seven aspects is alone sufficient to lead us to God-head. We never hesitate to say that a beam of light is one only, though when it passes through a prism, it is decomposed and seen as a spectrum or a band of seven colours. Even so, to an external observer of the spiritual life, or to a novice on the spiritual path, Karma, Nīti, Bhakti, Jñāna, Dhyāna, Kṛpā and Vairāgya may appear to be different from each other and as having an exclusive function of its own, but from the view-point of a realized soul they can never be separated and resorted to in isolation from others without damaging the integral spiritual life. How can Karma for instance, which is not supported by any of the remaining six aspects of spiritual life, be said to enable one to become a Karma-yogī in the real sense of the term?

2. Utility of Karma throughout the growth of spiritual life

What I shall be interested in pointing out in the course of my two lectures is that, in the first place, for the growth of spiritual life, our works ought to be not only altruistic and unattached to their fruits which may be either motives or effects of actions, but that, secondly, they must also be morally faultless and done as so many devotional offerings to God. And thirdly, when in course of time, due to our incessant attachment to God, there emerges in us the direct contact and consciousness of a full-fledged vision of God, our works ought only to become a fulfilment of the purposes and plans of God. There will then be no opposition between Karma and Jñāna; for, it will no longer be the human work as different from the divine. It will be wholly and solely divine in nature, just as the burnt fuel will be none else than fire. But to have this condition throughout our life, there must be, in the fourth place, the life-long, continuous practice of meditating on the Name of God and of contemplating (dhyāna) on His visions. Fifthly, as the Dhyāna is being perfected, there would arise in the mind of the sādhaka a natural disgust (Vairāgya) for all the Godless things in the world, including the considerations of one's own body and belongings. And, finally, with the divine light inside and outside, and the consequent energy, joy and peace, one comes to know the full significance of the Grace of God, and becomes ever loyal to Him with all his love and gratitude. Grace in the beginning, grace in the middle and grace at the end becomes the final discovery of man, and he clings to it to the end of his life.

My lectures are mainly based on my study of the Bhagavadgītā, though the general background is the result of several other factors. I know that the Gītā contains many contradictory statements and ambiguities of words and phrases, and that it is this fact which is responsible for the world-wide differences of opinions regarding its central topic. I have pointed out in the preface of my recent book, *The Brahma-yoga of the Gītā*, that various answers can be given to the single question, 'what is the central topic in the Bhagavadgītā?' "Duty for duty's sake; achieving the social good by being active throughout one's life; self-sacrifice for the purpose of self-realisation; propitiation of deities by means of penance, sacrifice and charity; leading the life according to the rules of castes and āśramas; resorting to Yoga in order to attain the Asaṁprajñāta Samādhi; philosophic contemplation upon the nature of the Absolute in order to go beyond the three guṇas; thinking always that one is identical with Brahman; meditating always on the symbols of Brahman, such as the sun, the moon etc; to achieve the moral virtues one after another; all such and several other answers can be given to that single question. But all this, we think, will only bewilder the intellect, especially so, on the background of some kind of miserable plight in saṁsāra, as it occurred in the case of Arjuna. What the Gītā offers as a remedy is not a multitude of them, some of which are merely speculative, some hazardous or dangerous, and some other attractive and useful to some extent, though ultimately illusive and unreal." I feel however glad that due to the direct and indirect guidance of many a great realized soul, these very contradictions and ambiguities have enabled me to discover in the Gītā a unity of purpose and plan, a part only of which I wish to depict to-day and tomorrow in as broad an outline as would be possible for me during the time at my disposal. To a casual listener and to a mere intellectualist, some of the statements about spiritual life are bound to appear as dogmatic; but the truth would dawn on them who wish to make a search for themselves. For, the life of the Spirit is primarily a personal experiment; it is afterwards that one can compare his notes with others who might have made a similar search for themselves.

3. *Weak arguments in favour of Karma*

I start with what is the most obvious and common to us all, namely, that aspect of spiritual life known as Karma, and shall confine myself only to the problem as to how it becomes more and more transfigured and carries with it more and more meaning as we rise higher and higher in spiritual life. We must remember at the outset that all the statements in the Gītā are not equally true. Many of them are only partially true; many of them are to be reconciled with other statements which seem to be contradictory; and many still are only Arthavāda sentences or provisional truths.

The statement therefore that none can remain alive without doing something or other (3.5), though obviously true, cannot be a sufficient argument why Arjuna should engage himself in a battle which he abhors. The argument that he was a Kṣatriya and therefore it was his duty to fight, holds some water, no doubt; but Kṛṣṇa could have waited for some time only to find Arjuna prepared again to fight on account of his being compelled by the force of his Kṣātra Prakṛti (3.5, 33; 18.59). If one's own duty and one's own 'dharma' were the only guiding principles of doing actions, and if resorting to 'paradharma' was really dreadful (bhayāvaha), then there was no necessity of Kṛṣṇā's advice that Arjuna should bid good-bye to all the dharmas, whether 'svadharma' or 'paradharma', and surrender unto him and be free from all sins (3.35; 18.66). And what is 'svadharma', even if it is understood in the sense of one's duty? Is it determined by birth, or by the 'qualities and actions' (guṇa, karma-vibhāgaśaḥ 4.13)? The son of a Kṣatriya may be considered as a Kṣatriya, and his son a Kṣatriya again; and this may go on till the inter-mixture of castes wipes out this distinction. If at all the class-system has any value even in India, it ought to be based, as it must haye been on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's and Vyāsa's authority, on the consideration of guṇa and karma. Judged from this point of view, Droṇācārya and Kṛpācārya ought to be considered as Kṣatriyas, so far at least as the battle of the Mahābhārata was concerned. The 'Svadharma' then of these two Brahmins was, at least for the time being, the same as that of Arjuna, namely, to fight and not to resort to 'sandhyā' and the study of the Vedas. So, 'Svadharma' or duty is not something which sticks to a man from the cradle to the grave, but may change from time to time according to circumstances. What appears now as paradharma may become svadharma and vice versa. A school teacher may turn into a politician, and the latter into a watch-maker, though the new duties which one may adopt may appear at the start as formidable (bhayāvaha). Duty is that which a man adopts voluntarily and consciously, and he is expected to be loyal to it so long as his conscience, his pledge or the terms of his contract bind him to do it. But there is nothing inexorable about it. So, the argument that Arjuna should stick to his duty of a Kṣatriya and be prepared to die while doing it is not convincing enough. Is it very difficult to understand that Arjuna ought to have been considered as being free to change his duty—whatever may be the motive —before the commencement of the battle, if it does not strike us as incongruous for Kṛṣṇa to say at the end of the Bhagavadgītā, i.e. after the instruction of the Brahma-vidyā was complete, and after the Viśvarūpa was shown as annihilating the enemies, that Arjuna was free to fight or not to fight? He was the most faithful disciple of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise, he would have rebutted the dilemma which Kṛṣṇa had proposed for him. He could have said that if he would win the battle he would lose the heaven, and if he would be killed in the battle he would lose the Kingdom of the earth, and so, he would be the loser both ways (2.37). Besides, is it not simply a device used by Kṛṣṇa to see how far Arjuna could be tempted by the words that the gates of the heavens are always open to the Kṣatriyas (2.32), when, as a matter of fact, Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself later on says that even those who go there on account of their great merit return to this mortal world after that merit is exhausted by the enjoyment of heavenly pleasures (9.20-21)?

4. *Karma in relation to sacrifice*

Nevertheless, the problem of Karma, as the Gītā itself admits (4.16), is one of the most difficult problems we meet with in the whole range of the philosophy and psychology of religion. Whether the effects of Karma live beyond the death of a man in the form of Apūrva or Sancita and become the cause of a future life for him or not, will be the concern of speculative philosophers. To us, what is important in the present context are its direct and concrete effects on the life of a man on this side of death, and its power of moulding the life of a man for good or for evil. Our task at present is to show how the Karma of a man is able to promote his ethico-spiritual well-being in all its stages, and how, instead of being a dead weight on him, it begins to make his life more and more valuable as it comes in relation with the other aspects of spiritual life. Of course, left to itself, it has its own defects and limitations; but these can be overcome when it is brought in connection with morality, bhakti, jñāna and dhyāna. The earliest such attempt in the direction of both morality and religion was the ritualistic aspect of Karma. The various deities were to be propitiated for having in return rain, harvest, progeny and wealth. Though this was a crude form of worship, a sort of bargain as if, between gods and men, it soon developed into a very important institution known as Sacrifice (Yajña), the basic moral principle of which is self-denial. So, instead of outright denouncing the Yajña, the Gītā has eulogised it by saying that it is a 'wish-yielding cow', and that like penance and charity it is the means of purifying the soul (3.10; 18.5). We are told that actions which are not meant for some kind of sacrifice bind a man, and that while those who eat the food which is left after the sacrifice is performed become free from sins, those who cook for themselves only eat nothing but sin (3.9-13). In its praise of the sacrifice, the Gītā goes a step further and connects it with the Brahman itself, and thereby raises the dignity of works. The rituals of sacrifice are ordained by the Vedas; and the Vedas, in their turn, have their origin in the immutable Brahman. Thus, it wishes to show that the sacrificial works are raised to eminence by being connected not only with gods but also with the Vedas and the Brahman (3.14-15).

5. *Hierarchy of sacrifices leading to Brahman*

The author of the Gītā was however keen enough to envisage that this theoretical connection between works and Brahman, as only assumed by the common man, would leave him more often than not at the mercy of gods or of his fate, and not connect him with Brahman in the least. Therefore, in order to wean away the interest of man from the selfish and transient objects of pleasure, and to increase his attachment towards what is really permanent and blissful, namely, the Brahman, the Gītā introduces skilfully an hierarchy of sacrifices and endows them with richer and richer meanings at every step. So, one may begin with a sacrifice where some material like rice or ghee is to be offered as oblations to a deity; but he may soon rise to higher levels where he has nothing to do with external fire, external materials, external deities and external objects of pleasure, but with his own physical, physiological, vital and psychical processes which will gradually make him sound in body and mind, increase his intellectual clarity, enhance his moral and socially useful qualities, and thereby prepare him for spiritual meditation and contemplation. All this will be achieved by works and works alone; for, being involved in the process of sacrificial activity, they will burn the dross and the impurities of man and retain what is valuable in him, whether it is physical, mental, moral or spiritual. Thus, there are the various sacrifices known as dravyayajña, tapoyajña, yogayajña, swādhyāyayajña and so on. Then comes the highest sacrifice known as the jñānayajña or the Brahmārpaṇa-yajña where the jīvahood itself with all its paraphernalia in the form of the Upādhis of body, senses, mind, intellect and ahaṁkāra are offered one after another as oblations in the fire of Brahman; and what then ultimately remains is nothing but Brahman alone. Thus it is that the works become lodged in the fire of the realization of Brahman. It is such work which, as Rāmānujācārya holds, assumes the form of jñāna, just as the fire assumes, in the reverse manner, the form and shape of the fuel that is put into the fire. How can works then bind such a realized soul? (4.23-33, 37). Whoever wishes to perform this sacrifice can do so, says the Gītā, by uttering the Name of God (10.25).

6. *Karma in relation to Prakṛti and Puruṣa in Sāmkhya and in Gītā*

Another brilliant way, in which the Gītā brings out the importance and the intimate relation of karma with bhakti and jñāna, is the manner in which it deals with the ethico-metaphysical problem of Prakṛti and its guṇas, the bearing of these on human conduct, and the relation of the two Prakṛtis and the two Puruṣas with the third supreme Puruṣa, known as the Puruṣottama. "There is no being on earth, nor among the gods in heaven who is free from the three guṇas of Prakṛti" (18.40), says the Gītā, and yet it advises Arjuna to attain the state of 'Nistraiguṇya' (2.45). The Sāṁkhya way of attaining this is to suppose oneself always as different from Prakṛti, and that all his actions are nothing but the movements of the guṇas. As a mere passive spectator, the Puruṣa is always free and transcends the three guṇas; what is required of him is that he is merely to become constantly aware that the organs of sense and action are being moved and drawn towards their objects by the force of the guṇas only (3.27-29; 13.29; 14.23). On such a view, actions can hardly be said to be voluntary and consciously performed. As such, no moral judgement can truly be passed regarding the conduct of man. And, the system being indifferent to the problem of the existence of God, there is no necessity of a further bond between man and God, and therefore no such things as surrender, prayer, grace, meditation and realization of God. What the Gītā did as a miracle, so to say, and as having taken a great step beyond the Upaniṣads, was to transform the nature of both the Prakṛti and the Puruṣa and to subsume them under the third category, namely, the Paramātman or the Puruṣottama. Though Prakṛti is as 'anādi' as Puruṣa, the Gītā does not consider it as an independent source of activity. The only independent Being and the only source of activity, including the power to create, to sustain and to dissolve the universe, according to the Gītā, is nothing but God. "There is nothing beyond Me, O Arjuna; in Me is woven all this, like beads on a string", says Kṛṣṇa (7.7). Even the eightfold Prakṛti comes forth directly from God (7.4). With specific reference to the guṇas, the Gītā asserts that 'they owe their existence to God only' (7.12). And, so far as the soul is concerned, he is but a portion (aṅśa) of the Lord (15.7). Though he dwells in Prakṛti and is said to experience the guṇas born out of Prakṛti, he is at the same time both the 'onlooker' and the 'approver' (Upadraṣṭā and Anumantā) of the course of actions which the Prakṛti wants to take. Nay, being of the nature of the highest Ātman also, he is capable of making the three guṇas subservient to his own spiritual development (13.21-23)

7. *Ethico-spiritual function of the three guṇas*

Such being the great divergence between the view of the Sāṁkhyas and that of the Gītā regarding the nature of Prakṛti and of the three guṇas, there also came about correspondingly a great divergence between the original and the changed functions of the three guṇas. Whereas with the Sāṁkhyas the three guṇas co-operate more or less to bind the man (14.5), according to the Gītā, it is on account of their opposition to one another that they become helpful in releasing him from their clutches. If the sattvaguṇa, that is the virtues that make the divine heritage (daivīsampat), namely, those that are mentioned in 16.1-3, are cultivated and made to predominate over the demonic heritage (Āsurī sampat), that is the forces of rajas and tamas mentioned in 16.4, it becomes capable of bringing in through all the senses the light of Jñāna (14.10-11); for, it is the sattvaguṇa which is very close to the Ātman. And if one is always in this condition (nityasattvastha), it would become easy for him to realize the Ātman also, though the latter transcends the three guṇas. Even the rajas and the tamas will then, in course of time, help the advancement of sattvaguṇa. Rajas will provide its activity, and tamas its steadying influence; and so the efforts of man to be good and noble and virtuous will not only increase day by day, but his goodness also will tend to be more and more a permanent feature of his character and will be an asset for his spiritual life. It is therefore worth remembering that the Gītā wishes us to perform only those acts which are connected with the Sāttvika kinds of sacrifice, penance, charity and renunciation, and not those which are connected with the rājasa and the tāmasa kinds of them. And for the same reason, it further wishes us to note a similar threefold guṇa-wise distinction of several other aspects of life such as kartā, karma, jñāna, buddhi, courage, happiness and food, and thereby enhance the sattvaguṇa in us (17.4-22; 18.7-11; 20-37).

8. *Devotion, the cause of transition from Nityasattvastha to Nistraiguṇya*

This is how with the very mechanism of the three guṇas which are supposed to bind a man, the works he does would help him to mould his ethico-social behaviour and bring into practice the very noble principle underlying sacrifice, namely, that of self-denial in order to achieve his own good as well as the good of others (lokasangraha). Thus it is that the utility of karma goes far beyond the cult of sacrifice and propitiation of the lower deities. Yet, there are certain limitations. The Sattvaguṇa too binds a man because of the egoism which clings to him on account of the consciousness of oneself being learned or spiritually enlightened or morally good and helpful to others (14.6). At the most, works which bear the stamp of sattvaguṇa might enable one to have his stand always on sattvaguṇa (nityasattvastha); but they will hardly enable him to jump over the sattvaguṇa and fall on the Ātman. The change from Nityasattvastha to Nistraiguṇya will only be achieved provided the works further bear the stamp of devotion to God and are done with complete surrender and resignation to the will of God. To use the terminology of sacrifice, they must be done as offerings to God, as materials for worshipping Him (3.30; 5.10; 9.26-27, 34; 12.10; 14.26; 18.46, 57, 65, 66). This is clearly expressed in the words of the Gītā, namely, that those who wish to be liberated should do the various acts of sacrifice, penance and gifts by the utterance of 'Om Tat Sat', which is the threefold indication of Brahman (17.23-27).

9. *Works may be offered to the Personal or the Impersonal aspect of God*

It need not be contended that the Gītā is wavering on the point as to whom the actions are to be offered, whether to the Brahman or to the Lord Kṛṣṇa. For, there is identity between the two aspects of God, the Impersonal and the Personal, though the Gītā is inclined to favour the view that the Personal is more important than the Impersonal (12.5-8; 14.26-27; 15.16-19). One obvious reason for accepting this view is that there is more affinity between the Person of God and the human personality than between the Impersonal Absolute and man. This is all the more obvious in the case of a living Guru who has the human body and mind but has the divine essence in him, and who is actually seen as being moved to pity at the sight of misery and ignorance, and as becoming the saviour of men by 'mercifully lighting the lamp of knowledge in their hearts' (10.11). So, one can even offer all his works and the fruits thereof even to his Spiritual Teacher who, on account of his having realized God, can impart the same knowledge to his disciples. This exactly was the relation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna; and so, just as Kṛṣṇa was the embodiment of Brahman, an Avatāra, even so, any great saint like Jñāneśvara, Tukārāma, Rāmadāsa, Kabīra, Jesus or Paul can be said to be the Personal aspect of God.

10. *Even the Eightfold Prakṛti can be an offering to God, through the medium of works*

So far, all that we have said about karma applies only to the Prakṛti consisting of the three guṇas. But so far as the offering of works with reference to the eightfold Prakṛti is concerned, we have a different device. On the Sāṁkhya hypothesis, Prakṛti being jaḍa, even the threefold psychological portion of it, namely, mana, buddhi and ahaṁkāra, is also regarded as being jaḍa. Naturally, Karma which arises due to the interaction of these three with the five organs of action and five of knowledge, namely, all our ideas, our constructions of thought, and all the actions owned by us on account of ahaṁkāra, are also considered as jaḍa in nature. And so, naturally, the Puruṣa has to make himself free from the effects of all such actions. As against this, there being in reality no such thing as jaḍa on the hypothesis of the Vedānta, and as the Gītā has successfully transformed the nature of Prakṛti as a whole into an obedient servant of God, known as Māyā or Aparā Prakṛti or even as a lower kind of Puruṣa known as Kṣara Puruṣa, Karma also cannot remain as a dead load on the shoulders of man. We have seen above as to how Karma, when it is used as an offering in the fire of Brahman, becomes one with Brahman. We have also seen how the mind and buddhi can make it sāttvika in nature after eschewing the rājasa and the tāmasa aspects of it. Even the element of ahaṁkāra would help to stabilize the sāttvika character of karma, provided the ahaṁkāra is of a sāttvika nature. For instance, as Rāmadāsa holds, the ahaṁkāra of what is true, beautiful, good and real is as good as absence of ahaṁkāra.

The question however as to how the jaḍa or the inconscient nature of the remaining five parts of Prakṛti, namely the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ākāśa can be changed and made use of in making the works as offerings to God is as novel as it is interesting. This fivefold part of Prakṛti which looks inert and passive is very cleverly shown by the Gītā as hiding within it a core of Caitanya or divine life. "I am the divine smell (puṇyogandhaḥ) within the earth; the lustre (tejas or prabhā) in the sun, the moon and the fire; the flavour (rasa) in water; and sound (śabda) in ākāśa (7.8-9)." They are the 'tanmātras' or the essences and not the qualities of the five elements; nor are they abstracted from the qualities which have the same names of the tanmātras, and which are considered as belonging to the five elements known as substances. It must be remembered that it is the tanmātras which are the source of both the substances and their qualities. They are the first in being, though they are known after their products, namely, the elements and their qualities are known. Hence, what the Gītā obviously intends us to do is to realize these tanmātras as the only reality at the back of all our sensuous experience, and thus to go beyond the alluring influence of the sensuous qualities of the elemental substances of which not only the objects of the senses are formed, but also our own bodies and senses. To illustrate: if one is fortunate to enjoy the flavour of the divine Name, he would try to mingle with it the flavour of the food he eats. Even his coarse food would then give him the delight of having eaten rich food. Then will the general, indifferent attitude towards one's routine dinner will be changed into one of joyful expectation and of gratitude to God for having given his daily bread. Similarly, he may be gifted to sing with a melodious voice and to produce sweet notes on the musical instruments; but, if he be further gifted to hear the 'unstruck sounds' of divine music, he would try to bring the former in line with the latter and thus enrich the quality of his art. Similarly, again, all his activities and reactions with reference to sensuous beauty, he will try to associate and assimilate with the non-sensuous, divine beauty, grandeur and lustre which he sees in the object of his spiritual experience, and which, as the Gītā says, is the source of the light and lustre of the Sun, the moon, and the fire. It is in this manner that the qualities of the sensible five parts of Prakṛti are capable of being seen in their original form; and so, activities or works connected with them will be found as informed by the Spirit of God.

11. *Ultimately, to achieve this and to cross the river of Prakṛti, Karma must be supported by meditation*

In this way, no part, even of the eightfold Prakṛti nor any karma connected with it is seen by the devotees of God as dead or inert. The entire field of Prakṛti, whether it consists of eight parts or of three guṇas, and as such, the entire field of the activities of man connected with them can be experienced as pulsated by life divine. The works of man become the works of God, the moment the life of Prakṛti is known and lived as the life of God. This is what Kṛṣṇa means by saying that the insurmountable river of Prakṛti is crossed by surrender unto Him, that is, by participation in the divine nature. Then alone, whatever one does, eats, gives etc. would become an offering to God (9.27-28). Then alone, the same human works which were mechanical and routine would shine with the glory of divine grace. Then alone, will works be said as being equivalent to the worship of God and will cease to bind the man.

12. *With richer and richer meanings, Karma becomes restricted in scope*

Now, the role of Karma will be altogether different when it comes in connection with jñāna and dhyāna. Already, it has changed its look thrice in the course of our discussion so far. Karma which is bound to be most egoistic, assertive and life-preserving on the animal level becomes to some extent in the case of human beings altruistic, social and accommodative, with the rise of the sacrificial cult and the emergence of an enlightened society. Now, any Karma, howsoever it may be useful for the preservation of the species and the individual, will not suffice for maintaining the religious impulse of propitiating the deities as well as the moral fibre of the social structure. To talk about Karma at this level adequately is to talk about it in terms of sacrifice, charity, penance and self-denial, and not in terms of the physical, physiological, mechanical, reflex or involuntary activity which is necessarily going on in the universe to keep up the economy of Nature. Karma, at the level of sacrifice and morality has got only a restricted scope but a richer meaning than the other types of Karma, namely, the physical etc., which have got a larger scope but a restricted meaning.

Next, when we rise to the level of devotion, whether it is directed to the Personal or the Impersonal aspect of God, Karma becomes further restricted in scope by being divested to a considerable extent of the dross of selfish motives and expectation of gains, whether they may be from gods or men. Karma here is motivated by love which a man feels for God. What keeps him interested in doing that is the joy of having communion with God, and what he expects in return from God is His love and grace on him. No doubt, along with this he might wish to have mundane and material pleasures; but this zest for satisfying the hedonistic urge of life is bound to be on the decline, as his love and joy in offering his several activities to God as flowers or material of worship would increase. The self-denial and the moral uprightness of the earlier stage will be there no doubt in everything that he does; but that alone will not constitute the Karma of the devotional level. The Karmayogīs of the devotional type will be fewer in number than the Karmayogīs of the moral type, just as the latter will be fewer in number than those who perform the various sacrifices only. The Karma of devotion will, on the contrary, be richer in meaning than the Karma of the moral life, just as the latter will be richer in meaning than the activity of bargain involved in a sacrifice.

Even so, when we rise from the devotional attitude to God and the consequent mental offerings to Him of whatever we do, eat, drink etc., to the concrete act of silent meditation on the Name of God or contemplation on the forms of His vision, our Karma becomes so much restricted in scope as to include nothing but meditation and contemplation. Not only is there now no necessity of lighting the fire and acquiring the materials for offerings in the fire, but also no necessity of being over-anxious to see whether our actions are good and full of devotion or not. For, all this is bound to be there if our Karma of meditation and contemplation goes on regularly and for a long time unhindered and without any exception. Whatever then we shall be doing when we are not engaged in meditation and contemplation is bound to fall in line with it and therefore shine by the lustre of God. We shall then know the significance of what Kṛṣṇa says about his own divine works and life, and get ourselves liberated by being like him (4. 9). It is only an 'unswerving and undisturbed devotion to God,' comparable to an 'unflickering flame', which will enable us to know "the infinite extent of God, to see Him and to enter into Him" (6.19; 11.54).

13. *Karma culminates in Jñāna*

When the devotee thus comes finally to this stage of being one with God by entering into Him, it is but natural that he should lose his name and form, and that God alone should remain as the only Reality, just as the river which enters into the ocean loses its name and form, and the ocean alone remains. And when the insignificant, tiny agent, (kartā) vanishes only to become as large as the Infinite, shall we not expect the same with his works and say with Kṛṣṇa that 'all the works culminate in Jñāna' or are burnt in the fire of the realization of Brahman (4.33, 37)? A river is useful till it runs into the sea and is dissolved into it; but the Karma of a saint becomes useful in the moral and the spiritual uplift of man even after he becomes one with God; that is, the Karma of protecting the good and destroying the evil would continue to be useful to generations after generations even after his death. To a mere intellectualist or to a theist like Pringle-Pattison the merging of the saintly life in God may appear as extinguishing the lamps one after another; but to a mystic of the type of Śrī Śankarācārya or Kṛṣṇa, the fully realized soul (Jñāni) becomes the receptacle of the Brahman (14.27). This is the fullest Life Divine; and here it is that the soul exists in its real nature of Brahman.

14. *Karma of a realized soul*

Having come so far, let us now raise a crucial question regarding the relation of Karma to God-realization. Does Karma or activity exist at this stage or not? Or, to put the question in another form, 'Is the realized soul capable of doing action or not?' The answer to this depends upon what we mean by a 'realized soul,' and upon what we think regarding whether God himself can be said to be active or not. If by activity we mean some overt act like locomotion, muscular movement, or even a covert one like the cerebral induction of nerve-cells, or the rising of blood towards the heart, then God being without limbs or body or tools cannot be said to be active at all. Besides, as Kṛṣṅa says, there being nothing of which He is in need, or which he does not already possess, there is no cause for being active in this sense (3.22). But if activity is just another name for Caitanya, for the conscious, wilful, purposive and intelligent plan which forces itself to be a concretised reality of space and time, then certainly God is active to the core. As Aristotle says, He is the most active of all, because being of the nature of Pure Form, He contemplates upon himself. Naturally, it follows that one who has realized God is active not only because he overtly does something as a socio-ethical being, but also, and more so, because he meditates on the divine Name and contemplates on the divine forms which he actually sees with or without his eyes. To an external observer, he might perhaps look as a slothful person who does nothing to ameliorate the social and the political condition of the State; he might even be looked upon as a parasite upon the society in which he happens to be. But this is not correct. Like Aristotle's God, again, himself 'unmoved' or living even as a recluse in the cave of a mountain, he might be moving the entire humanity by his invisible moral and spiritual activity towards the goal of God-realization. People are prone to mistake a slumbering volcano for a dead one.

15. Action and Inaction involve each other

The realized soul, in short, is necessarily as active as God is. So, it will be altogether wrong to consider him as a mere passive spectator. To understand this is to understand one of the most important, but at the same time, one of the most neglected verses of the Bhagavadgītā, namely, "one who sees actionlessness in action and action in actionlessness is a wise person; he is united (with God) and he can be said to have done all actions (4.18)." The inactivity of a Brahmajñānin cannot certainly be the inactivity of a slothful man. Nor is it the inactivity which is perforce imposed upon the senses and the mind by one who is a yogin in the ordinary sense of the word, that is, by one who is an expert in Prāṇāyāma and other yogic feats. It is the inactivity which is due to absorption in meditation on the Name of God or in contemplation on the vision of God, and due to which the limbs of the body refuse to move; nay, even the eyelids refuse to close. Thus, at the back of the superficial inactivity, there is the activity of absorption in God. Similarly, at the back of his activity in his social life is involved the conscious force of the Ātman who is according to Srī Rāmānujācārya, the 'Akarma' or the Ātmajñāna itself. As a matter of fact, there is no such thing as inactivity with reference to the full-fledged Ātmajñānin, as it is not with reference to God. His being ever conscious of God is the kind of unique activity he displays even through his three states of wakefulness, sleep and dream. We may say that he is both supra-active and supra-wakeful; a karma-yogin who, besides being active in the ordinary sense of the word, is at once a jñānī, that is, the realizer of the peace and bliss of Brahman and a bhakta. To him, there is no contradiction between karma and a-karma; for, as we have just seen, both involve each other. That is why, as the Gītā says (15.10), "Let him move or transmigrate from one body to another or be steady; let him be engaged in eating or in other activities according to his guṇas; being endowed with the (divine) eyes of Jñāna, he sees the Lord always."

16. A real Karma-yogī must first be a Bhakta and a Jñānī

Thus it is that all the physical, mental, vital and other activities of the person who is a Brahma-yogin first and last are tagged on to his central activities of meditation on the divine Name and contemplation on the Forms of God. Thus it is that he becomes free from the selfish motives of actions, and unconcerned with the good or bad effects of his actions. He is convinced that his motives are the plans and purposes of God; that he is simply an instrument through whom the divine actions are being performed, and that therefore the fruits of his actions also belong to God. Such a man alone ought to be declared as a Niṣkāmakarma-yogī. He alone can be said to have combined in him the Yoga with God and with the works of God; and he alone can be said to have renounced his selfish attachment to the motives and to the fruits of actions, as also to the actions which fall outside the plans of God. Being always a 'Yogārūdha', that is being always on the march towards God-realization, he brings into operation for his progress both the methods of purposeful activity (karma) and the steadying influence (śama) of contemplation on God (6.3). In him is there the unique combination of both pravṛtti and nivṛtti. This constitutes his equality (samatva) and he derives this on account of his being 'lodged in Brahma-yoga' (yogastha) since Brahman itself is the 'uncontaminated, equanimous' condition (5.19).

14

The Other Six Aspects of the Saintly Life

I POINTED out in my yesterday's lecture as to how Karma, which is generally considered as different from the Jīva or the Kartā and as being jaḍa in nature, becomes assimilated with the divine nature on account of its being not only an integral part in the moral and the spiritual progress of man but also on account of its being an instrument of executing the plans and the purposes of God. It becomes the work of God; and it is the saint who alone like Arjuna knows and does exactly as God would wish him to do. So, in my yesterday's lecture, I have described at full length only one point of excellence of a real saint; or, I may say I tried to lead you along the windings of one of the seven currents of spiritual life which ultimately culminated in the main current of Jñāna. As the time at my disposal is short, I shall remain content today by describing only a broad outline of the remaining six aspects of that saintly life.

As all the seven aspects of the spiritual life are knit together very closely, or to put it differently, as the seven currents mingle into each other, one gets necessarily the taste of them all simultaneously. That is why in discussing the nature of karma, yesterday, we inevitably discussed to some extent the nature of Nīti, Bhakti, Jñāna and Dhyāna. Today, I shall speak more of these four aspects first, and then briefly refer to Vairāgya and Kṛpā.

1. *Criteria of Jñāna are both ontological and epistemological*

First of all, with regard to Jñāna. This is an ambiguous word. It means either the inferential and verbal knowledge about Reality, or the actual realization of it. As the saint possesses the latter kind of knowledge, his intellectual description of it is accurate and trustworthy, though it is described by way of analogy and symbols; while, in the case of others, whether learned or otherwise, it is bound to be hazy, vague and doubtful. The saint's knowledge of Reality is therefore mainly known to himself; and as it remains a sealed book to others, it is looked upon as an unreasoned dogma, either believable or unbelievable as one may choose. This is the reason why the saint appears as an enigma and why the ordinary standards fail to judge him. As the Gītā tells us (2.29), it strikes as wonder to ordinary people that some rare person becomes able to see the Ātman, or that some other is able to hear the sounds and words which emanate from it. Nevertheless, the Gītā has supplied us with certain criteria which would determine whether a person who claims or is claimed to be a Jñānī is really so or not. These are known as metaphysical criteria, but it must be remembered that they are to be discovered in actual, concrete experience, and are not to be merely assumed for speculative purposes of creating systems of metaphysics and theology out of them. Of course, by being epistemological in nature, they are not to be supposed as having a subjective significance only; they go beyond the subjective experience, inasmuch as they are the characteristics of an object which is one and the only Reality, and which we may call indifferently as God, Absolute, Ātman or Brahman. Ontologically and primarily, they belong to the object, though from the point of view of the person who realizes the object by participating in its nature, they become afterwards the criteria of the subjective experience also. The sweetness of a mango resides in the mango, no doubt; but it is at the same time useful to indicate the experience of one who eats it. Though objective, it has to be discovered first in experience.

2. *Contradictory description of Reality*

Hence, the object of spiritual experience, as the Gītā tells us, "is neither cut by weapons, nor burnt by fire; it is neither moistened by water, nor dried up by wind" (2.23). And, hence also, we can say that he alone who has got this experience can be said to be a realized soul. Similarly, we can say about both the object and the experience about it that they present the contradictions which are equally true. The spiritual object thus goes beyond both the formal Logic and the Hegelian dialectic. It is experienced as possessing all the organs of knowledge and actions, as also devoid of them all; as being both saguṇa and nirguṇa; as identically the same inside and outside; as movable and immovable; as far off and near at hand, at the same time; as indivisible though appearing as divided. It is seen as smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest; as the most lustrous and yet on occasions the blackest of all; as consisting of innumerable hands, or of feet or of eyes, or without any hand or foot or eye (13.13-17); as having neither beginning, nor middle nor end; that is, as causing bewilderment whether it is the head or the feet or the middle portion of the body; as both attractive and fearful at the same time (11.19,45); as identically the same on all sides of one's own body, and on the body of any other creature whether it is a dog, a cow or a brahmin (5.18); as stationary now, and now as enveloping all the quarters and the space between the earth and the sky (11.20); as appearing before the sādhaka in his own bodily form or in the form of any other saint living or dead, or of any deity; as giving rise to the experience that one is seeing himself in all the beings and all the beings in himself (6.29); and ultimately, as seeing the Viśvarūpa as the origin, the sustainer and the destroyer of everything except the devotees who have become one with God (11.18,32). The ideal saint not only sees God but also comes to know His plans and purposes and the way in which He wishes to execute them (11.21, 26-27, 29).

3. *Like Karma, Bhakti and Dhyāna culminate in Jñāna and are useful to save others*

This is the height of mystical knowledge which, as Professor R. D. Ranade says, is the direct, first hand, immediate contact with Reality. But in order that the fire of knowledge should continuously remain blazing in us, we must continuously supply the fire with the fuel of devout meditation on the Name of God and of contemplation on the divine visions. We must direct all our thinking and the energy of our mind to understand the nature of the vision before us, to become constantly united with it by fixing our gaze upon it, and to become one with it by entering into it (5.17; 11.54). It is only by means of a regular and long, long, devotional discipline and concentration of the energies of the senses and the mind, that is, by means of Bhakti and Dhyāna, that one can be able to know and to possess the innumerable divine virtues. Thus it is that devotion culminates into jñāna, and theism into mysticism; and, so it is that for the maintenance of jñāna, devotion is required, and for mysticism theism is required. In other words, a jñānī or a mystic is necessarily a theist and a devotee. He will then not only fear God but love Him too, and will know that God loves him far more deeply and truly than he loves God. His love for the other devotees of God will also be on the increase; and this will lead him to pity and to love the humanity which is immersed in ignorance, vice and distress. Himself, as a loyal and loving servant of God, he will also be a servant of the erring humanity, and behave with it as an instrument of God in uplifting it and bringing it on the path of God. As God was kind to pick him up, he too would be kind to pick up the inquisitive and the afflicted (the jijñāsu and the ārta) amongst them and bring them on to the path of God. If God takes 'compassion on him by bringing before his mind's eye the lamp of Knowledge' (10.11), he too does the same unto other people by being an intermediary between them and God, that is, by initiating them into the knowledge of the Ātman (4.34).

4. Performance of miracles, an interference in Divine Plan

In doing so, the saint gets the power of God; but he does not utilize it in working out miracles, as a devotion-less yogin might do. To him, the performance of a miracle is an interference in the execution of the plans of God, though sometimes, in order to increase the faith of the devotees of God or of persons who have been newly initiated into spiritual life, he might pray to God and invoke his grace for relieving them out of their distress. And, in order to please the saint, God too might do or undo as is required for the occasion. Then, it would be within the power of God to alter or modify His own plan, or to nullify the effects of the past evil actions of a particular aspirant or devotee. This, no doubt, will be called as a miracle. But then it is no interference in the plans and purposes of God by the saint; it only becomes a renewed plan of God, for which the devotion of the saint becomes an occasion and not an instrument.

5. *Prayerful dhyāna, the guarantee of spiritual life*

So far as the saint's own life of morality, spiritual illumination, devotion and niṣkāma karma is concerned, it is guaranteed by his regular practice of 'dhyāna', his constant attitude of surrender and prayer to God to forgive his faults and to grace him. During the course of his dhyāna, that is, during his two-fold activity of meditation on the divine Name and concentration on the forms of divine visions, he feels that he is 'entering' into God. This is not however like the moths entering into a blazing fire for being destroyed, nor like the Siddhas, the Ṛṣis and the deities who 'entered into the Viśvarūpa for the sake of being protected' (11.21, 29), but like a river into the ocean for being one with it. His surrender is not like that of a slave before a tyrant, but of a loyal and grateful subject before a benevolent King; or, better still, like that of a child into the arms of his mother. Naturally, his prayers also are not like the loud cries of a beggar for alms; nor are they meant only for relieving him and his kith and kin from miseries of poverty and disease, but mainly for receiving the Lord's grace so that he may grow in spiritual knowledge, joy and peace. His genuine love for God entitles him to implore God to send His grace, as if as a matter of right. It is his dhyāna-yoga which makes him more and more of a veteran soldier of the spiritual life, who fights mercilessly against the wanton pranks and stupidities of the flesh, and captures the citadels of the senses, the mind and the buddhi in which his enemies in the form of desires, temptations, lust and anger go for shelter, and kills them outright (3.40, 41). "Being lodged in Brahman, he becomes as unperturbed and as uncontaminated as Brahman," (5.30), though on all hands he is surrounded by 'upādhis' of various kinds. 'Like a flame which burns without a flicker', he stands erect and unmoved in spite of the violent winds of passion which might blow over him, or of the terrible calamities which might befall him (6.19-21). Sometimes, 'like a tortoise, he withdraws his senses from the objects of sensuous pleasures and desires; while sometimes, like an ocean he allows all the violent currents of desires, passions and anger to enter into him, so that they all might lose their urge and be dissolved into the calm and peace of the Brahman which he enjoys' (2.58, 70). And, sometimes, again, just as waves dashing furiously against a rock recede without making any dint on it, even so desires themselves leave the saint who has seen the Ātman (2.59). Verily does he go beyond the excesses of pleasures and pains and beyond the bondage of the three guṇas on account of his unswerving devotion to God (14.26).

6. *Saintliness compatible with emotions*

Does this mean that he transcends the emotional life altogether? If so, we may at once say that his spiritual life would become poorer on that account. Never think of an ideal saint as having the heart of a stone, or that his life is bereft of the human qualities of compassion, fellow-feeling and tenderness of the heart. Like the contradictory nature of the spiritual object, the saint too is a queer mixture of contradictory qualities. The author of the drama, *Uttara-Rāma-Caritra*, in describing Rāma, describes the saint as an extraordinary person possessing an heart which is harder than the adament and yet softer than a flower. He exhibits the former aspect of his character when he is confronted with his own miseries; and the latter when he sees the miseries of others. This is how Professor Ranade, for example, used to behave, as I can say it from my own experience about him. And this is true of any other great saint of the world. He may exhibit all the sterner qualities of a Sthitaprajña or a Guṇātīta, but he will melt with pity at the sight of the miserable condition of others, and will try his best by deed and words to console them and to remove their distress. This would be his spontaneous reaction and not the result of deliberate thinking. No doubt, he will seize this opportunity for making them spiritually-minded and will try to bring them on the pathway to God.

7. *Sama-darśana compatible with Viṣama-Vartana*

The saint does this all because he follows in the footsteps of the Lord Kṛṣṇa, who hurls down the wicked and the vilest among men, as also the lustful and the jealous into the wombs of the Asuras, but who showers his grace even on the worst of the sinners and lifts them up into his domain provided they get themselves attached to Him (9.30-31; 16.19). As a matter of fact, there is nothing in the universe which is not connected with God. He is the 'thread round which everything else is woven'. But so far as his transcendental nature is concerned, it cannot be said that He is connected with anything else (7.7, 12). The relation however which God has with his devotees is unique. "He is in them and they in Him" (9.29). Even so, the saint has no relative. But he and the other saints who love God become the relatives of each other. This is exactly what is meant by 'samatva' (equality). There are no friends or foes fixed or given in advance for the saint or for God (9.29). For, a foe may become a friend, if, by chance, he begins to take interest in spiritual matters; and a friend may become a foe if, by misfortune, he not only recedes from the spiritual path but also becomes an enemy of God and his devotees, by himself being a victim of greed, power, lust and other gross pleasures of life.

Unfortunately, however, there are people who have got a wrong notion of samatva. They understand thereby that the saint behaves exactly in the same manner whether he meets good or bad people. But this, as we think, betrays only poverty of intellect. It is neither the sign of intelligence nor an example of praiseworthy conduct to worship the undeserving and to disrespect the deserving. Who but an idiot will put grass before a dog or meat before a cow, though the Gītā tells us that 'one who has realized God will see His immaculate form as being the same on the body of a dog or of an elephant or a cow or a learned person ?' (5.18). People do not understand that Samadarśana is compatible with Viṣama-vartana. No doubt, spiritually all creatures are potentially of equal worth, though here, too, there is a difference of degree. But, from the view-point of every-day life, behaviour with them ought to differ from man to man, since there does exist amongst them the difference of kind. To treat the saint, the rascal and the fool equally might perhaps be a prudential necessity, but it is utterly unjustifiable from the view-point of moral and spiritual discipline, even though they all are ultimately and essentially divine in nature. One who does not understand this and therefore behaves indiscriminately can hardly be called a saint at all.

8. *Joy meets joy and becomes contagious*

There are a number of other characteristics of the saint which are both the means and the results of his devotional meditation and experience of the visions of the Ātman. In the first place, there arises in him the unique joy of having seen the beautiful and the sublime forms of God. As the periods of meditation increase in number and duration, the joy also is bound to increase in depth and duration. And this, in its turn, so helps the sādhaka to increase his hours of silent meditation that, in course of time, there occur fewer and fewer gaps of joyless state of mind. The joy of the first period of meditation goes beyond that period and meets the joy of the second period, and the joy of the second period meets the joy of the third period, and so on, till at last the saint becomes joyful throughout the day and night and is able to drown in it all his miseries and anxieties. He then becomes ever contented with whatever he gets for the maintenance of his life and with whatever condition of body or mind in which he finds himself.

One peculiar feature of this joy and contentment is that it goes beyond the mind of the saint and becomes easily detectable on his face and in his activities even to an outside observer. His face, forehead and eyes shine with a peculiar lustre, which is nothing but the reflection of the divine lustre which shines inside and outside of him. Another feature of this joy is that it is contagious. It makes others also for the time being joyful, and so enables them to forget their troubles. This is the unasked, natural gift of the saint to those who come to have a look at him. Even while the visitor feels the contrast between himself and such a saint, he feels at the same time that he is himself being elevated to some extent at least on account of that august and joyful presence before him. Why this should happen is not difficult to understand. The saint owes all his courage, energy, joy, fearlessness and freedom from worries to the presence of God in and outside of him; and so does the visitor get the consolation, joy and courage by the presence of the saint before him.

9. Then follow the Brahmanic purity and peace, destroying sins and vices

In the wake of Ānanda follows the peace (Śānti) of Brahman, in which even the tumultuous waves of the ocean of joy become perfectly calm and present a delightful sight. This is quietism at its highest; the Caitanya of the dynamic, conscious force having resumed its original, restful, contemplative mood of a serene, unnamable bliss. When the sage attains this stage of the silent, blissful condition of being one with Brahman, will it be ever possible for him to harbour any jealousy, ill-will or revenge against any one else? For, that will only drag him down from that exalted position of Brahmanic peace to the commonplace level of division, duality, feud and misery. Besides, he knows that to be jealous is only to sow the seeds of jealousy in others, and to have nothing in return except spoiling one's own mental condition. Therefore it is that the saint is always careful to be above the taints of vice and sin. To say, however, that he transcends both sin and merit, and vice and virtue, does not at all mean, as some false Vedāntins wish us to believe, that he indulges promiscuously in doing sin and merit, but that before transcending virtues and merit, he has already transcended every vestige of sin and vice. The transcendence of sins and vices refers to the non-committing of them at any time; while the transcendence of merit and virtues refers not to the non-committing of them but to the non-attachment to egoism which might perhaps stick to him. As a matter of fact, as Śrī Madhvācārya suggests, the practice of virtue must continue even after the realization of God. Thus considered, the transcendence of virtue is for all practical purposes a misnomer. In short, it is the perfection of the purity of mind—and this, we think, is the essence of all moral and spiritual life—that will keep the saint aloft in the Kingdom of God. So, for this as also for 'Lokasangraha' the practice of virtues and virtuous acts to the end of life is absolutely necessary.

10. Vairāgya, the index of all-absorbing love for God

Naturally, a saint like this would abhor all things which are likely to keep him away from God and God-like persons. Love for God, which means an irresistible longing of the heart to look with wonder and joy at the most beautiful and attractive visions of God at all times and in all places, being his only dominant passion, he would naturally like to resort to secluded places where he will be free from the din of the crowds, whether it occurs in temples, or in factories, cinema-houses or market-places. We know that it has become the fashion of the day to say with imaginative poets and speculative philosophers that one can meet God more truly in such places than in solitary places. True it is that God is omnipresent and immanent in all things. But the test, whether we really love God or love all other things under the pretext that we love God who is immanent in them, lies in seeing Him as transcendent first and loving Him exclusively and independently of all other things. Otherwise, an hypocrite also may continue to say that he loves the immanent God, though, in fact, he might be loving all other things except God. This is analogous to saying that one is a Niṣkāma Karmayogī though he is neither a tyāgī (non-attached to the fruits of actions) nor a sannyāsin (renouncer of all actions). If a person can really renounce the fruits with perfect calmness of mind, will it be impossible for him to renounce sometimes at least the actions as also the desires for fruits which act as the motives of the actions? As the test of tyāga lies in occasional sannyāsa, even so the test of love for an immanent God lies in loving God in his transcendental form. And when one begins to love the transcendent God as the only object of love, he will certainly do the same for the immanent God also, inasmuch as it is the same God who is both inside and outside of him. But, just as a goldsmith cares only for the metal gold and not for the various forms and names of the ornaments made of gold, even so, the saint, whose sole object of love, awe, reverence and worship is God, will look upon all other God-less objects with the attitude of spiritual indifference or dispassion which we may call as Vairāgya. Care must however be taken not to confuse this attitude with that which is born out of cynicism or which is just another name for weakness or incapacity to enjoy. The saint looks upon all the sensuous objects and pleasures as beset with some or other defect such as old age, disease, decay or death, (13.8). In short, one of the most important characteristics of an ideal saint is the Vairāgya and the consequent desirelessness for all the mundane prosperity and well-being, even though he be rolling in wealth, and his name is known throughout the world. He may be in perfect health; his body may be strong, beautiful and robust; he may look much younger than what he is; but, instead of being puffed up with this, he feels grateful to God for having given this all as means, and not as an end, in order to carry on his meditation with all the will and zeal at his command. We may therefore call this attitude as the bedrock of asceticism on which he founds the glorious Divine Home for himself and for others like him.

The Vairāgya seen in a great saint is however different in kind from that displayed by one who is newly initiated in spiritual life. While the latter is a forced and deliberate attempt to desist from being interested and entangled in the temptations of pleasures, the former is the natural result of being attracted and absorbed in the delightful vision of God. One is due to the negative injunction of Anāsakti-yoga, the other, a positive force of Āsakti (attachment) to God. The Vairāgya due to the deliberate assumption of Anāsakti might only be a temporary phase which sometimes overtakes a person who attends a funeral ceremony; but the Vairāgya of a real saint is the natural result which comes to stay as a permanent characteristic of his saintly life after a long, long practice of moral and spiritual discipline. It is this type of Vairāgya which is considered as the index of the high water-mark of the intense and the absorbed contemplative life of a God-intoxicated mystic.

11. Like God, the saint too is an object of fear and love

And, then, with all his interests and activities centred in God, and fenced on all sides by the fire of dispassion, the saint moves in the world with fearlessness and freedom from desires and anxieties. Come what may; let the heavens fall on his head; or let the dreadful death knock at his doors; he remains fearless and firm. But, will he not also be afraid of God? No, not in the least. For he is now not only a loyal servant and friend of God; he is not different from God. Will water be afraid of water, or fire of fire? So long as there is unity with God, and at the same time unswerving devotion to Him which keeps this unity unimpaired, so long as, in other words, there is Bhakti in Advaita, the saint has no fear of any sort. This great quality of fearlessness (Abhaya), of which the Gīta and the Upaniṣads speak so highly, is a two-fold virtue of the saint. Not only does it mean that he becomes himself fearless, but it also means that he does not cause fear to any body. On the contrary, he loves all those who approach him for being saved even though they are his enemies. Paradoxically, however, the saint too like God, must be considered as an object both of fear and love. Like

God, he too may act as a consuming fire towards those who are wicked and sinful. Let not people therefore dilly-dally with him by outwardly behaving in just the opposite way. In no way shall a dishonest person be safe in the hands of God or of a saint.

12. Grace of God is for him the only key to spiritual treasure

What then, finally, will be the desire of such a great saint and his consequent prayer to God? With all his perfection, he would still entertain the desire of depending on the grace (Kṛpā) of God in order to be a trustworthy instrument to carry out the divine will. The all-told results of his ethico-spiritual efforts, namely, his direct illuminational experience, his concentrated devotion, surrender, sacrifice, worship and service to God and the Guru, and the feeling of utter aversion to God-less things, will never be consolidated into one single indivisible spiritual force unless they are cemented from the beginning to the end of his life by the grace of God. Among its several teachings the Bhagavadgītā tells us on so many occasions how the divine grace, which in no way depends mathematically on the worth of man, which is entirely free and goes where it listeth, is needed at every step throughout his spiritual career. It is with the grace of the Guru or of God, that the spiritual life starts at all. As the Gītā tells us, the Jñānin initiates the disciple into the knowledge of the Brahman, if the latter approaches him with humility and serves him (4.34). Arjuna had first acknowledged Kṛṣṇa as his Guru; and then it was that Kṛṣṇa began with his spiritual sermon. It was on several occasions in the Gīta that Kṛṣṇa of his own accord was pleased to narrate to Arjuna the secrets of spiritual life. "It was on account of my being pleased with you," says Kṛṣṇa, "that you have been able to see this highest vision of the Viśvarūpa" (11.47). And Arjuna too admits that it was on account of the grace of the Lord that his infatuation and doubts were destroyed, and that he stood convinced and was prepared to fight as the Lord had wished him to do (18.73). The Lord assures us that "whoever would trust and fix his mind on Him would overcome all obstacles and attain to the eternal and imperishable divine abode by His grace (18.56, 58). It is the divine grace which puts an end to all miseries (2.65); it is the divine grace that dispels the darkness of ignorance by the lamp of Jñāna (10.11); it is the divine grace that bestows the celestial eyes (divya-cakṣu, 11.8) and opens before the devotees the treasures of the spiritual life; and finally, it is the divine grace that enables the devotees to know and to see God, and to enter into Him" (11.54).

13. No difference between the grace of God and that of the Guru

God alone is not the dispenser of grace. A powerful Guru, an ideal saint, or even a powerful disciple of such a Guru is able to impart the grace with equal force. The great sage Vyāsa could confer it on Sañjaya who, though closeted with the blind old King Dhṛtarāṣṭra in a place far away from the battle-field, became able to see and hear what was going on between Arjuna and Kṛṣna. Sañjaya not only saw the Viśvarūpa, but was seeing it even while Arjuna was seeing it; and he became thrilled with joy as Arjuna was thrilled. Arjuna felt himself blessed in that he was graced by God himself; Sañjaya too acknowledges with gratitude that he was blessed by Vyāsa in exactly the same manner. Does not one lamp which is lighted by another shine exactly like the other? Even so, the grace of God or that of the Guru or that of a great and loyal disciple whom, as Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says, the Guru imparts his grace and makes him his equal, is one and the same. It makes no difference whether you are loyal to God or to the Guru. St. Paul asked the people to follow him if they wished to be saved, just as he had followed the Christ and argued in order to justify his advice that the Christ lived in him. So, naturally, the one thing which a saint would always desire is to have the grace of God; and so, the one prayer he would offer to God would be that He should grant His grace always to him. The saint knows from experience that if one has only the grace of God, he has everything else with him, spiritual Kingdom as well as the earthly prosperity and well-being in every respect. Sañjaya sums up this all by uttering the prophecy that "Wherever there are Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Yoga, and Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, there are glory, victory and abiding justice" (18.78). We may just repeat this in a different way by saying that glory, victory and abiding justice will necessarily be there wherever there is the grace of the Lord Kṛṣṇa and the loyal servant of his who is ever prepared to work in accordance with the will of God. And lo, where are the two,—the devotee and God? It is the grace or the will of God which alone manifests and fulfils itself through His own instruments; the devotees and the saints being only fortunate in that they are chosen by God.

14. Conclusions arrived at

Recapitulating what we have said during the two lectures of yesterday and today, we come to certain below-mentioned conclusions regarding the spiritual life which, though negatively expressed, will clearly bring out what we stand for.

(1) Karma which is neither moral nor devotional, and which does not culminate in the illuminational kind of knowledge will make of us mere rattling machines which will grind nothing but our petty and selfish desires.

(2) A morally good life without devotion or realization of God is no doubt highly commendable as being of utmost value both for the individual and the society; but it can never be a substitute for the spiritual life. Mere gunpowder by itself will never explode; it is necessary to ignite it.

(3) Bhakti which is not at once the combination of an attitude of love, fear, awe, reverence, dependence, surrender and prayer; which is not attended by joy, peace, courage and firmness, and which does not result in compassion, fellow-feeling and forgiveness, will soon degenerate into hollow ritualism, sentimentalism, external exhibitionism and hypocricy.

(4) Jñāna, too, if it does not arise out of bhakti and be the cause of Vairāgya, will be nothing more than learned but barren gossip, which will perhaps be useful in scoring verbal victories over the opponents, but which will never save the souls of even the possessors of it.

(5) Dhyāna, which is neither meditation on the Name of God nor contemplation on the divine visions, will either end in profound sleep or in a cobweb of futile imagination.

(6) Vairāgya, that is disgust for God-less things, which is not the result of Jñāna in the sense of the realization of God, would only mean the state of cold Stoic indifference to the affairs in life and would thereby be the cause of

gloom and despair.

(7) In the absence of the grace of God or of the Guru, the entire spiritual life from the beginning to the end would be a vain search for God. For, there would then be nothing but egoism which, being spiritual in nature, will be the deadliest enemy of the spiritual life itself.

(8) And so, finally, in the absence of a consolidated, integral and indivisible spiritual life of the fore-mentioned seven aspects of it, there would emerge the one-sided, deficient, sectarian views about the different and exclusive ways of attaining Godhood, namely, those known as Karmamārga, Bhaktimārga, Jñānamārga, Yogamārga and so on.

In short, the spiritual life, instead of being monolithic in character, is a homogeneous mixture of the seven ingredients, namely, Karma, Nīti, Bhakti, Jñāna, Dhyāna, Vairāgya and Kṛpā. These seven aspects are so organically connected that they cannot be severed from each other without damaging the spiritual life itself.

15

Epilogue

Waving of Lights to the Lord by Saint Jñāneśvara

LET US NOW, at the end of our delightful venture in the secrets and the laws of Spiritual life wave the lights round the blissful image of the Lord, as the great saint Jñāneśvara has done it in the ecstatic consciousness and company of the Sadguru, and to which Professor R. D. Ranade has invited our attention in his Preface to his monumental work, *Mysticism in Mahārāshtra* (page 12). We shall borrow in part the translation which the Professor has made of the Āratī (the waving of the light). Jñāneśvara says:

Blessed am I that my fortune has come to fruition in this very worldly life, inasmuch as, taking me by hand, my Sadguru has led me by the mysterious path of awakening of the Kuṇḍalini to the region of the Trikūṭa, *i.e.*, the place which lies behind the portion between the two eyebrows and the upper end of the nose, and has shown me the abode of the Lord, known as Pandharī. There I saw the very Ātman and enjoyed unspeakable bliss in which was drowned my egoism. When I entered the Sanctuary my bodily consciousness was lost, my mind was changed to supermind, all sense of bound-ness was then over, reason came to stand-still, words were metamorphosed into no-words, and I became motionless, when I saw my own Self. How can I give expression to that unspeakable joy? The wicks of the three guṇas (Sattva, Raja and Tama) have become fully ablaze, when to my great wonder the self-effulgent and the imperishable light began to manifest incessantly as I concentrated my attention on it. My eye-lashes ceased to twinkle, my mind became unable to distinguish between day and night, because it was lost in enjoying the unspeakable bliss. When I was performing the Āratī and waving it round the image of the Lord, Viṭṭhala, the light of it increased so much that it came out of my body and filled up the whole of the space to such an extent that even the light of the sun and the moon was lost in it. At this very moment, there arose the unstruck sounds of various celestial musical instruments, and gave me unspeakable bliss. And then, finally, in that ocean of ecstatic joy I took a deep plunge, and enjoyed fully the unspeakable bliss. Thus did I perform the Āratī in the company of my Sadguru (Spiritual Teacher), Nivṛttinātha, and found that all the states of my mind had become calm and composed.

Glossary

Abhanga	a stanza of a poem containing eternal Truth.
Abhyāsa	practice.
Ahaṁkāra	egoism.
Akarma	non-doing of action.
A-Kṣara	that which does not dissolve.
Anādi	without beginning.
Apāna	the wind that is thrown out.
Āptakāma	one whose desires have been fulfilled.
Āpta-vākya	the trustworthy account as given by an expert.
Apūrva	fruit which is unseen but reserved for future occasion.
Arcana	worship.
Asaṁprajñāta	the state of mind where one is not consciously aware of the object.
Āśramas	the four stages of life known to the Hindu society, viz., I. Brahmacarya or celibacy in order to serve the Spiritual Teacher and obtain the Brahma-vidyā by means of the study of the Vedas; 2. Gṛhastha, the householder; 3. Vānaprastha, during which one either lives in his own home as a guest or goes to live in a forest on account of his increasing non-attachment to his usual duties of an house-holder; and 4. Sannyāsa, when one finally becomes

	able to renounce everything for the sake of God.
Aṣṭa-bhāvas	the eight sāttvika effects of the sight of God, viz. horripilation, trembling, standing still, sweating, choking of the throat, shedding of tears, pallor, and absorption.
Asura	a demon.
Ātman	the Real Being which is immanent in the body. (see Brahman).
Ātma-Nivedana	surrender unto the Self.
Avatāra	1. incarnation of God. 2. the Divine Vision which appears before a devotee.
Avidyā	1. ignorance. 2. an aspect of Māyā.
Baddha	bound by fetters of Karma.
Bhakta	a devotee.
Bhakti	devotional discipline.
Bhāva	emotional state of the mind.
Brahman	the one original Reality, indifferently called as Ātman, God, Absolute or the great Spirit.
Brahmārpaṇa-yajña	consists of sacrificing mentally everything in the fire of Brahman.
Buddhi	intellect: understanding; intuition.
Cancala	unsteady.
Caitanya	the Spirit; the spiritual energy.
Cit-śakti	consciousness as force.
Dāsabodha	a work of Saint Rāmadāsa containing the ethico-philosophical teachings of spiritual life.
Dāsya	service to God or to the Saints.
Dhāraṇā	holding something before the mind's attention.
Dharma	duty; religious practice.
Dhyāna	1. Dhāraṇā with intensity and for a longer duration; 2. meditation on the divine name; 3. contemplation on the vision of God.
Dravyā-yajña	a sacrifice in which material like rice,

	ghee, etc. is thrown in fire as offerings to the deities.
Guṇas	(pl. of Guṇa) the universal qualities which are three in number, and are known as Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. They bind the individual soul in the manner of a rope (which is the meaning of the word 'guṇa')
Guṇātita	one who has transcended the thraldom of the three guṇas.
Guṇa-Māyā	Māyā as containing the three guṇas.
Guru	Spiritual Teacher.
Haridāsa	one who performs Kīrtana.
Jaḍa	immovable; lacking the spiritual energy.
Jīva	the individual soul.
Jñāna	1. intellectual knowledge; 2. realization of God.
Jñānottara Karma	works done after attaining Jñāna.
Kaivalya	final emancipation.
Kalpanā	imagination.
Kānhopātrā	the name of a concubine's daughter who became a great devotee of Viṭṭhala, the God of Pandharpura.
Karma	work, action, activity.
Karma, Theory of	a belief according to which there are three kinds of Karma, viz., Prārabdha, Sancita, and Kriyamāṇa which connect the past, present, and the future lives of any being.
Kartā	Doer.
Kīrtana	a spiritual sermon interspersed with songs and narration of the glories of God.
Kriyamāṇa	activities of the present life which serve the purpose of being Sancita and Prārabdha of the future lives.
Kṣara	that which dissloves.
Kṛpā	grace of God.
Kśātra Prakṛti	nature of a warrior.
Kṣatriya	1. A warrior.

	2. a person belonging to the warrior class.
Kumbhaka	that aspect of Prāṇāyāma in which either 1. the inhaled breath is withheld in the lungs for a longer time than usual, or, 2. the breath is exhaled without inhaling new breath for a longer time than usual.
Kuṇḍalini	the energy which is supposed to lie in a serpentine form at the bottom of the spinal chord and which rises right upto the brain through the spinal chord during the yogic process.
Lokasangraha	achieving the ethico-spiritual Good of the society.
Mana	Mind.
Manana	contemplating upon what one reads or hears.
Mantra	a word or a combination of words imparted by the spiritual Teacher to the disciple as the act of initiation into the spiritual life and as constituting the sense of Reality.
Māyā	the power of God.
Mokṣa	liberation.
Mūla-Māyā	the spontaneous desire of creating the universe which arose in the Absolute or the Impersonal Brahman.
Mumukṣu	one who desires to get himself released from the bondage of the fetters of Karma.
Namaskāra	salutation.
Nirbīja	inefficacious (e.g.—Mantra, one which does not result in the vision of God).
Nirguṇa	1. bereft of any quality. 2. Not affected by any of the infinite qualities, though possessing them.
Nirvikalpa	without any mental activity.
Niṣkāma Karma	1. works done without any selfish motive.

	2. Works done in obedience to the will of God.
Nistraiguṇya	the state of transcending the three guṇas.
Nīti	moral conduct.
Nivṛttipada	supramental condition.
Om Tat Sat	'Om' is verbal symbol of the Brahman, 'Tat' meaning 'that' refers to Brahman, and 'Sat' which means the Highest Good also refers to the same Brahman.
Pāda-sevana	serving at the feet of the Lord or of the Guru.
Pāpa	Sin.
Paradharma	duty of other persons.
Pārasa	a fabulous stone conceived as having the power of transmuting iron into gold by a mere touch.
Praciti	Non-sensuous direct experience.
Prakṛti	1. as consisting of the three guṇas, namely Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. 2. as consisting of eight parts, namely the five elements of Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ākāśa (ether), and of mind, intellect, and egoism.
Prāṇa	vital breath.
Praṅava	the syllable 'Om'.
Prānāyāma	One of the eightfold disciplines of yoga, which consists in controlling the ingoing and outgoing breaths in a systematic manner, so as to create, for the time being, the artificial and yet the beneficial state of either the suspension of breaths, or of the filling of the lungs by air, for the purposes of bodily health, concentration, and devotion.
Prārabdha	activity of the past lives which have just become fructified in the present life.
Puṇya	merit.
Puruṣottama	the best among the puruṣas.
Puruṣa	one who possesses the spiritual energy.
Rajoguṇa	the drive of selfish activity.

Riddhi	miraculous power.
Sabīja	efficacious (e.g.—Mantra, which results in the vision of God).
Sādhaka	one who practises the ethico-spiritual discipline.
Sādhanā	means for attaining spiritual knowledge.
Saguṇa	endowed with qualities.
Sahaja Samādhi	effortless Samādhi.
Sakhya	friendship.
Samādhi	1. the equanimous condition of the intellect. 2. the state of being fully absorbed in God.
Sankalpa	1. desire. 2. imagination.
Samprajñāta	the state of mind where one is consciously aware of the object.
Saṁsāra	worldly life.
Sancita	a storehouse of the impressions of the activities of the past lives which are waiting to be fructified.
Sannyāsin	one who has accepted the Sannyāsa Āśrama.
Śāstra	scripture.
Sattvaguṇa	the drive for purity and spiritual illumination.
Sāttvika	the condition of being endowed with Sattvaguṇa.
Siddha	one who has attained perfection.
Siddhāsana	a kind of yogic posture.
Siddhi	miraculous power.
Smaraṇa	the act of remembering.
Sphūrtirūpa Ahaṁkāra	a spontaneous awareness of one's ego.
Śravaṇa	the act of hearing.
Sthitaprajña	one whose understanding has become steadfast by the realization of God.
Sūtra	aphorism.
Svadhyāya-yajña	a sacrifice consisting of the study of the Vedas and of other spiritual literature.
Tamoguṇa	the desire of stupid inactivity.

Tapo-yajña	a sacrifice which consists of bodily and mental penance.
Unmanī Avasthā	supramental condition.
Upādhi	any circumstance, physical, social, mental, or intellectual which arrests the freedom of the soul.
Vairāgya	disgust for God-less things.
Vajrāsana	a Kind of yogic posture.
Viśvarūpa	the vision of the universal Being.
Viveka	discrimination.
Viveka-pralaya	philosophic way of annihilating the consciousness of the universe.
Vṛtti	mental state.
Yogārūḍha	one who has ascended (the ladder of) the yoga.
Yogayajña	a sacrifice consisting of the eightfold, discipline, namely, control of the senses, possessing moral virtues, posture, control over breaths, withdrawing of mind from objects of pleasures, resorting to meditation, absorption in it, and the ultimate equipoised state of mind.

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